A TREATISE OF PRAYER.

With Several

Useful occasional *Observations* and some larger *Digressions* concerning the Judaical Observation of the LORD'S DAY, the External Worship of GOD, &c.

By *George Bright*, D. D. Rector of *Loughborough* in *Leicestershire*.

LONDON,

Printed for *John Wright*, at the *Crown* on *Ludgate-Hill*. 1678.

DONAVIT REV. VIR
RA. PERKINS, L.L.D.
ECCLESIÆ hujus CANONICUS.
A.D. 1732.

To the Right Honourable *Theophilus* Earl of *Huntingdon*, Lord *Haſtings*, &c. And *Lucy* Counteſs Dowager of *Huntingdon*.

Right Honourable,

THE *Diſcourſe which ſome time ſince you were pleaſed to honour me by your Commands of appearing before you with, was but a proof of a larger Treatiſe concerning Prayer, not long before diſpatched. It was then far from any deſign of publiſhing: but I ſince finding many things by me, and many more coming to my Mind not altogether unworthy (as I thought) the peruſal of the more candid and intelligent, which might moſt conveniently appear ſomewhere inſerted in the handling of ſuch an Argument, I was inclined to make uſe of the Opportunity.*

I own the moſt ordinary and common Reaſons of Dedications, viz. *to teſtifie the real and inward Honour and Reſpect I have for the many excellent Qualities of your Ho-*

nours, to expreſs my Acknowledgment particularly to your Lordſhip and noble Anceſtors in my own and others Names, and to perform ſome ſmall ſervice to you in the Subject treated of.

I am not unſenſible that ſuch a thredbare Argument (hardly any one thing having had more Authors) in ſuch a plain if not ſometimes an offenſive Dreſs as a great part of it appears in, without the advantage of any Ornament, may ſeem ſomewhat an unſutable Preſent to your Honours. But as there are many things in it (as I think) not obſerved, and many not in ſuch manner delivered by others: ſo I know too that your Honours are not to learn from me that generally the moſt familiar and well known matters are truly of the greateſt and moſt conſtant uſe, and to prefer plain and important Truths before that which is only fine and new. Beſides that ſo great Goodneſs as yours will not forget to excuſe me, by conſidering that the Perſons among whom I am now placed make it my moſt proper Employment to explain and teach the moſt ordinary but uſeful Dutys of Religion; Sometimes

times at leaſt in the moſt plain and ſimple manner I can: and then ſo little prudence as my own ſerves to tell me that the place it ſelf may put me in mind of acknowledging in ſome mean way rather than none at all (my little leiſure and my very broken Health not permitting me to do better at this time or perhaps hereafter) the great Bounty of your Lordſhip's illuſtrious Predeceſſors to the Church and Univerſity, to Religion and Learning (without doubt the two beſt things in the World) who were pleaſed to beſtow the Patronage of this Rectory and three other of plentiful Revenue upon the happy place of my many years thoughts. Your Lordſhips moſt advantageous Temper, great Capacity and happy Education under ſo virtuous and learned a Parent ſeem not to permit any departure from the ſame generous Inclinations. May others imitate them, eſpecially in this prophane and fooliſh Generation, in which true and uſeful Knowledge, Virtue, though wiſe and manly, Piety though generous and excellent are attempted to be trampled upon by ignorant and conceited Drollery, and not only an unchriſtian

ſtian but an unmanly Debauchery; which nothing ſo much ſupports as the Dulneſs and Confidence of the Brutes that practiſe it.

Theſe either, they know not how to ſeparate Superſtition (an ignorant Fear and Zeal) from Religion, and to ſecure themſelves from the one without throwing away the other: or they gladly take Occaſion through the ſecret perſwaſion of their fooliſh and hurtful Luſts from the former to do the latter. They muſt needs put away the Wheat with the Chaff, not only an ignorant and baſe fear but alſo the moſt reaſonable free and ingenuous Reverence, Honour, Love and Obedience to their Maker, the moſt amiable and ſatisfying Object the Soul of Man can behold and embrace; without whom we can never be what we ſhould or would be; whom if we poſſeſs not by Contemplation, Love and Likeneſs to, we are either ſo little minded as never to enquire for, or ſo unhappy as in vain to endeavour after our moſt compleat Perfection and Felicity.

As for ſome ſmall Service which I propoſed to my ſelf of performing to your Ho-

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nours, I hope it was not without ſome reaſon. Some of the Contents of the enſuing Treatiſe may not be altogether uncapable of it; and I have not had the Honour and Happineſs of Converſe with any Perſons of your Quality, Age and Sex who are more able to judge of what is true and profitable, or better diſpoſed to make uſe of it. Thoſe who know your Honours will eaſily make the perſonal application. And yet (Madam) I humbly beg your Leave to be but in one word ſo juſt as to let others know as well as my ſelf that your natural Parts, your acquired Learning, your diſcreet Piety and Virtue, your obliging Goodneſs are ſuch as moreover render you the juſt Æmulation and Pattern of all of your Sex and honourable Condition and me in particular (as I alſo am your Lordſhip's)

Your moſt Faithful and Humble

Servant in all Chriſtian Offices,

Geo. Bright.

Imprimatur

Hic liber (cui titulus, *A Treatise concerning Prayer*, &c.)

Dec. 12. 1676.

G. Jane, R. P. D. Hen: Epis. Lond: à Sacris Dom.

THE PREFACE.

After all the vaſt and not unpleaſant ramble that the mind of Man may take through the Univerſe, it muſt at laſt ſet down content (and well it may) with the Knowledge and Practice of Religion *as the poſſeſſion of the greateſt good it is capable of: The plain end and ſum of which is to fear and honour God ſo as to keep his Commandments of loving him above all things, and our Neighbour as our ſelves, and therefore our ſelves; that is, willing and rejoycing in the greateſt Happineſs of all Beings exiſtent conſidered together as one Body, and therefore of each Particular ſo as is effective of the greateſt happineſs of the whole. For by Religion (of the Object not Religion of the Subject or Religiouſneſs) I mean nothing elſe but a Syſtem of Doctrines made known from God to Men concerning their Duty, or concerning other Matters which may be any way means or helps to*

practiſe and obſerve it. Theſe Doctrines may be made known either by our natural Faculties of invention and reaſoning, or by Revelation. Thoſe which are made known by our natural Faculties with which we are born may be called natural Religion. As for Example, That Good is to be willed; that therefore a greater good is to be willed more than a leſs, and the greateſt moſt of all: that is, the greateſt good as to Intenſion, Extenſion and Duration is to be willed with the greateſt force and intenſeneſs of our Minds, and always. For by the ſame reaſon that good is to be willed by us, the greateſt is ſo too: nor is the propriety of any thing but the goodneſs of it the only reaſon why it is the object of our will. In few words, That the greateſt good of the whole Univerſe in reſpect of Intenſion and Duration be the ultimate Object of our Wills always either immediately or mediately actually or habitually, and not that of any part and therefore not of our ſelves. *In which one Doctrine is all formal Virtue contained, and from it are all particular Virtues eaſily deduced. This is the firſt and great Law of Nature, or which is invented or judged true by our natural reaſon.* 1. *Plainly like as in the animal body or rather the compounded creature man (that we may comprehend the nature of Virtue by a moſt eaſie ſimilitude) all the functions and operations of each particular member are ſuppoſed to be performed not for*

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its own or any other member's proper good but for the greateſt good of the whole body, or rather of the whole man; in which their own too ſo far as it is conſtitutive or any way effective thereof, is neceſſarily included; ſo very eaſie and obvious is the confutation of all thoſe falſe ſyſtems or hypotheſes of morality which make virtue to conſiſt in all our dutys to be deduced from ultimate ſelf-love. *The vaſt and moſt univerſal importance of this truth and its not being yet ſo commonly minded as it ſhould, may, I hope, be a ſufficient excuſe for the ſeeming importune and unneceſſary mentioning and interpoſing of it in the following Treatiſe. Add to this thoſe other as they are ordinarily called* Laws of Nature. *Such as are that God or an all-perfect Being is to be worſhipped, that is, honoured, prayed to, be obeyed, &c. that we ought not to make happy the wicked nor unhappy the righteous or thoſe who will and endeavour the moſt publick or univerſal good, that we ought to be beneficent, grateful to our Benefactors, and particularly to Parents, and ſcores the like. All which are nothing elſe but ſuch Diſpoſitions and Actions which by Reaſon or Experience have been found and concluded to have more good Effects than their contraries, or than their Omiſſion, or to be moſt for the univerſal and common good: and are indeed Rules or Directions for our Prudence.* 2. *(As are generally the voluminous reſolutions of thoſe which are called caſes of Conſcience) to obtain the*

ultimate End of all our Wills and Actions, viz. *the greateſt good of the Whole, in the willing of which End only is that which I call Virtue, and without which there is none at all. Theſe, I ſay, and ſuch like Doctrines and Truths being made known from God to the Minds of Men by their Faculties of Invention and Reaſoning with which he hath cauſed them to be born, are very well termed* Natural Religion.

Thoſe Doctrines concerning our Duty, &c. *which are made known either immediately or mediately by Revelation are called* Revealed Religion. *I ſay*, immediately or mediately. *They may be made known* immediately *from God to the Perſon himſelf who is to know and practiſe, and no Man can tell how much this is or hath been in all Parts and Ages of the World: inſomuch that a good part of that which hath been thought natural, eſpecially ſome more ſpiritual and extraordinary Truths, may be revealed, inſpired or ſuggeſted to ſome Men; though the ſame things may have been known naturally by others too. For who can tell juſt how much to whom and when God hath immediate Influence upon the Underſtandings of Men?*

Again, They may be revealed mediately *by others; and that by Angels or Men. The firſt was done to all the Prophets, except* Moſes. *according to the* Jews: *The ſecond to all Men who have received any Doctrines from the Prophets.*

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Among the Prophets by whom God hath revealed these Doctrines there have been two the most eminent and illustrious. Moſes *first and then* Jeſus Chriſt *the Meſſias fore-told and promiſed by* Moſes *himſelf and many other of the Prophets. The first of these gave the* Jews *an entire Syſtem of Laws and other Doctrines: The ſecond partly by himſelf but principally by ſome of his Diſciples delivered a great many to all Man-kind. The firſt is called the* Moſaical *or* Jewiſh, *the ſecond the* Chriſtian Religion.

From this ſenſe of Religion it is manifeſt that it can be nothing but Sottiſhneſs, Ignorance or Madneſs that can make Men hate or deſpiſe it in general. For is it poſſible for any thing elſe to put no difference between Actions, to have no Rules thereof, to deſpiſe that which teacheth them, as if all things were alike eligible? and yet there are ſuch brutiſh Perſons who would not be troubled with the Choice and Purſuance of any End, though it be only their own perſonal good: But would rather follow their fortuitous Imaginations and Inclinations. They hate to take any Pains to confine or direct their Choices and Inclinations by any Rules though ſuch as are only to obtain their own greateſt bodily and worldly good.

But indeed thoſe generally who contemn or hate Religion mean by it not all Directions of their Life and Actions (for they have Wit

enough to like well Epicurean *brutiſh Morality) but the true natural and eſpecially revealed Religion, which contain ſuch Rules of their Duty and other Doctrines as are contrary to their ſelfiſh inordinate and immoderate Appetites or Luſts of Malice, Pride and Senſuality which teach and help Men to reſtrain and mortifie them: and to introduce a Univerſal Goodneſs, Piety, Charity, Humility, Spirituality and other as comprehenſive Virtues which want Names. But what can be more evident than that if* ought *be to preferred before* ought not, *if the greateſt Perfection and Felicity of the whole World, nay, of every particular Perſon be valuable and to be preferred before their Imperfection and Miſery, It muſt be inſufferable Selfiſhneſs and Pride, together with deſirable Ignorance and Folly that muſt cauſe them to regard it without the greateſt Reverence and Love.*

And as for the Chriſtian Religion it is certain that in general all its Doctrines are ſo confirmed or at leaſt uncontradicted by the natural and Catholick Religion: and particularly all thoſe which concern our Duty are if rightly interpreted ſo perfectly ſuch, (not any being yet deprehended or made good to be otherwiſe by the moſt witty and malicious, or wiſe, honeſt and unprejudiced) with ſo much aſſurance, ſimplicity and ſincerity delivered: Alſo all its other aſſiſtant Doctrines concerning God's Nature and Actions, Jeſus Chriſt

Chriſt the Meſſenger of it, good and bad Spirits, Man-kind, their Original, Nature, Duration, &c. *(This may be no inconvenient Method for a Syſtem of Chriſtian Religion) are ſo truly uſeful to make Men the moſt perfectly virtuous and holy or to perform their Duty, ſo pleaſant to contemplate by reaſon of their ſtrangeneſs and greatneſs, that it muſt needs be the moſt ſeriouſly and deliberatedly loved and admired by the wiſeſt and beſt men.*

One part of the Doctrines that all Religions contain is concerning that infinitely perfect Being called God; viz. *his Nature, infinite Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs; his Actions, Creation, Preſervation and Providence; and then our Duty towards him, which is in one word to Worſhip him: that is to contemplate, honour, love, rejoyce, truſt in, deſire from, imitate, obey him,* &c. *and to ſignifie this by convenient ſigns.*

Among theſe our Dutys towards God one, viz. to love God for himſelf *is a part or Inſtance of Virtue or Univerſal Goodneſs, the reſt are Inſtruments or Means thereof.*

The Duty of Prayer ſo as is explained and deſcribed in the enſuing Treatiſe is not only to deſire and petition any thing from God: but contains all his Worſhip, nay it neceſſarily infers all our Duty univerſally. Our ſolemn profeſſion and reſolution of Obedience and conſequently Imitation of God (God having com-

manded us to be like himself) which is one Ingredient in a Prayer necessarily imports the practice of all our Duty whatsoever. For God is or hath commanded one way or other by natural Light or Revelation all we ought to be and do.

The Nature and Uses of this ordinary Duty are so particularly described in the Treatise it self, that I shall not here add any thing but only that I hope they are so plain and reasonable as to be understood and approved by all who are guided by good Understanding, and to secure it from the unjust Contempt of some who may neglect or despise it.

These are, First, the Ignorant and Vulgar whose Souls are sensual and dull that they are very inept to all Spiritual things, and therefore much uncapable of such an Employment. These are as much as may be to be better instructed and rendred more capable of it. In order to which it would be well if the Affairs of Humane Life were so ordered that the meaneſt might have more leisure and opportunities for Religious Duty's of Reading, Praying, Hearing; and have more vacancy from bodily labour and motion and hardship which require and make a tough and strong but gross and dull temper of Body. And it is likely that if it were not for the insatiable Covetousness and Ambition of Princes and States which perpetually fill the World with Wars and consequently make necessary,

ceſſary, hardy, ſtrong Bodys and diſſolute Manners and a hundred little ſubſervient Employments. (Such good reaſon is there for the Litany Petition for Unity, Peace and Concord to all Nations.) *Were it not for the Pride and Luxury of private Perſons; there would be much fewer Neceſſities of Humane Life and much more time to all ſorts of Men for Spiritual and Divine things. The moderate Care and Labour of Men ſparing ſome time each day and ſome whole days probably would ſufficiently provide for all ſuch conveniencies of the bodily Life as may render it the leaſt Impediment or the moſt ſubſervient (which is its right uſe) to the ſpiritual one. The principal part of which is the Converſation of Mens minds with God; the Imitation of his moſt perfect and happy Life to the utmoſt of our Power in the greateſt Knowledge and Virtue, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, Prudence and Beneficence. Wherefore I cannot approve the Temper of many now adays who ſeem to make it the only End and Deſign of Government to increaſe Riches and People and Trade in a Nation, from whence they take all their Reaſons and Meaſures of all Laws and Conſtitutions. As if Men were made for nothing but to enjoy all the Conveniencies and gratifie all the Appetites of this preſent pitiful fleſhly Life, to eat, drink, enjoy Wives, Children and Relations, to live in Health, Strength, Eaſe, to be ſafe from all their*

their Enemies, or to extend their Fame and Dominions abroad. Whereas in truth the whole Furniture of this bodily Life is but in order and ſhould be ſubſervient to the ſpiritual or intellectual one, that we might live it with leſs interruption or diſturbance our ſelves, and propagate it in others, and there is nothing more plain than that the inordinate and immoderate gratification of our bodily Appetites, or thoſe which are proper to this fleſhly Life, eſpecially ſenſual ones is the moſt inconſiſtent with a ſpiritual and virtuous Temper, and conſequently with the moſt perfect and happy *Condition of Man-kind. Nor ſeems it much to be hoped to ſee the World in better Poſture till the Affairs thereof are otherwiſe ordered, or it ſhall pleaſe God more immediately by a larger Effuſion of his Holy Spirit, by his Power and Virtue upon the Souls of Men to frame, temper and diſpoſe them.*

A Second ſort of thoſe who are apt to think ſomewhat meanly of this religious Duty of Prayer, are the learned, who are moſt converſant in Science and addict themſelves to Speculation. Theſe oft-times very much neglect Practice, *they little and ſeldom mind* Morality, *of which I reckon* Piety *or our Duty towards God to be without compare the moſt excellent part. By how much the Objects of our Speculation are of a more different and remote nature from God (as are all corporeal things with their Affe-*

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ctions) by how much they are more numerous and various, by how much they require a greater Intenſion of Spirit (as very ſubtil and profound things in the Mathematicks and Metaphyſicks:) So much the more ſtill do they draw away the Mind from Religion and Piety: inſomuch that the greateſt Scholars are not always the beſt Men. It is true indeed that ſome Knowledge where the Objects of it are intellectual (as that of our own Souls and the mutual Relations and Reſpects of things) by ſpiritualizing our Minds doth prepare and diſpoſe us to apprehend and be affected with God: but then alſo by more vigorouſly employing the Application of our Minds and more intenſely pleaſing them, it perhaps more effectually detains and with-holds us from Piety than our Converſe with ſenſible and external Objects. Nay, in Moral and Religious Knowledge it ſelf it is not only poſſible but I believe very frequent for Men to be ſo inordinately and immoderately pleaſed, taken and in Love with the meer Knowledge or Speculation of the Objects thereof, as to have very little Care, Eſteem and Love for the Practice, or the really having it in their own Hearts, that is, their Wills and Affections. They are altogether different things for a Man to perceive and underſtand and that very diſtinctly and clearly the Perfections of his Inclinations, Appetites and Affections, and to poſſeſs them or have them really in himſelf: to know all the Rules of Morality

lity *and therefore of* Piety, *and to practiſe them. The one is a quality of the* Underſtanding, *the other of the* Will and Affections. *They have two different faculties and actions of the Soul for their Subjects, and therefore the one may be and full often is in the ſame Soul where there is nothing of the other; (though I acknowledge that* uſually *the beſt and cleareſt Knowledge of Humane Nature is from a Man's own Experience of himſelf, of which the reaſon is obvious) and conſequently a Man may have one for the Object of his Eſteem and Delight, and the other not at all. Nay, the more he minds and loves the one not in order to or for the ſake of the other, the leſs will he mind or love this other. In few and known Words meer* Speculation *even in Religion and Morality may and moſt often doth more pleaſe Men than the* Practice, *and the more the one is for it ſelf prized and beloved, the leſs is the other. 'Tis like as when ſome unweildy or lame Perſon with much pleaſure conceives, deſcribes and teaches others the beſt Poſtures and Motions of Vaulting or Dancing who never was nor is able nor cared at all to perform them himſelf: or like Hunters who are only delighted with the finding and catching their Game but care not for eating it.*

But becauſe the Effects of Mens Science and Speculation are generally more or leſs beneficial and acceptable to the World. (Which is not ſo

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in their poſſeſſion of Honour, Riches or ſenſual Pleaſures) the immoderacy of the Appetite after it is not ſo much obſerved or blamed.

Theſe Perſons are to be remembred that Morality *of which as I ſaid* Piety *is incomparably the moſt excellent part, is infinitely to be preferred before Speculation; a generous Virtue before Knowledge; the perfection of our Wills before that of our Underſtanding. For the firſt (as I have ſomewhere elſe had occaſion to mention) being nothing but an habitual deſigning and intending in all our Actions the Univerſal Good,* in its own Nature neceſſarily *tends only to an infinite good and is unconceivable to be ever made otherwiſe by the will and power of God himſelf: the other* barely and in its own Nature conſidered *only delighteth our ſelves. Nay, not ſo much as that perhaps but only by God's Will. Speculation therefore is an idle and uſeleſs thing compared with Action.*

And even in Speculation it ſelf, that which hath God a Being of Perfection unſearchable and incomprehenſible by any but himſelf for its Object, is incomparably the moſt raviſhing to the Soul of Man. And yet it is moſt commonly ſeen that every ſmall Speculator *or* Theoriſt, *a Philoſopher, Mathematician, Linguiſt, Critick, Politician and Theologers too, eſpecially Polemicks are very prone to deſpiſe and look down upon Piety and practical Religion as a great*

great way below them; to leave them as ordinary things fit only for little and vulgar Minds, whilſt they are employed in Matters of higher Concern and Importance.

The Third Sort of thoſe who hate or deſpiſe Piety and all Religious Dutys towards God are vicious and debauched perſons. Theſe do it often partly becauſe of their dulneſs, principally becauſe Piety is inconſiſtent with the gratification of their Luſts: and particularly in Men of fierce, haughty and ſwelling Tempers, becauſe it is oppoſite to their Pride, becauſe it confines and controuls them, takes away their Liberty, puts them in mind of their Meanneſs, placeth them in the ſame rank with the pooreſt of Mortals. For they affect Uncontroulableneſs and Licentiouſneſs, they would be ſubject to none, acknowledge no Superior, would be and do only what they themſelves liſt, at leaſt have ſome priviledge above others. It is certainly inconſiſtent with ſuch Tempers to acknowledge God's infinite Superiority to themſelves and their entire Dependence upon his Will and Pleaſure, to deſire any thing from him with a humble reference of all their Petitions to his infinite Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs; or to return any Thanks unto him, to own and pay the moſt juſt Tribute of Obedience as well as the meaneſt of his Creatures, to confeſs, diſown, deſpiſe or pity themſelves, be grieved for their unreaſonable Self-will and Diſobedience; to acknow-

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ledge their Guilt and deſerved Puniſhment, and yet God's Right of Remiſſion upon their ſincere Repentance and their humble and important Requeſt; and that too for the ſake of another who was that which they have been ſhamefully deficient in, (viz.) *the moſt perfectly righteous and obedient: All theſe and ſuch like moſt juſt Dutys to our Maker theſe diſſolute licentious and proud Creatures muſt needs hate and deſpiſe as repugnant to their Luſts, controuling their Liberty and obliging them to the moſt ſenſible Reflection upon and Confeſſion of their Meanneſs and Baſeneſs. Hence they'l ſometimes deny or cavil at them, and the very Exiſtence of God himſelf, as much as their wit and care of their ſafety will give them leave. Or for want of theſe when they have little or nothing to ſay, and with them too, they'l hiſſ at them, with a ſcornful piſh, throw them away and neglect them as a Cheat or at leaſt a thing uncertain and troubleſome. Thoſe who are governed by a Belief of God and Duty towards him they pretend to look upon as weak, of no Parts or Wit, timorous, ſuperſtitious, little and low minded, whilſt they conceit themſeves to be great Spirits and noble Souls indeed.*

Alas for them! goodly things indeed they are! To whom in ſhort it is to be anſwered, that it is a wicked thing to affect to have what they ſhould not, and as ſilly to deſire what they cannot obtain. It is a wicked and unreaſonable thing for thee to deſire thy Liberty from the Direction and Govern-

Government of him who is infinitely better and wiser than thy self; who is infinitely good, and immutably delights in the effecting of the greatest good of the whole Universe, and is infinitely wise and infallibly knows what doth effect it; who knows and can do all things, upon whom are dependent all the Natures and Existences of things possible to be; who therefore hath all the right that can be conceived to be the Law-giver of the Universe. If thou or any the most accomplished and perfect Being besides himself comply not with or conform not to his Will, thou canst not be innocent, but thou must be he who preferrest thy own self before the whole Universe, and hast in thee that Insolence to desire that all may minister to thy Pleasure: than which what can be more prodigiously unreasonable wicked and unjust: But if it be reasonable to be obedient to and to be like God because he wills and commands all for the Universal good, then is it also reasonable that we should perform all other Dutys of Piety *to him (Acknowledgment and Contemplation of his Perfections. Honour, Petition, Thankfulness, Confession of and Grief for our Transgression of his Laws, &c.) which dispose and cause us to obey and imitate him*

Nor are these swaggering Hectors less foolish than wicked. For whether they will or no they ought to be and shall be what God willeth. All things that are any thing really existent

must

muſt be the Effects of his Will, and dependent upon him who is Infinitely Perfect, for otherwiſe he is not ſo. All that he wills concerning us, is either what we ſhould be (the due Relations of our Actions to their Objects) or what we ſhall be: the one is ordinarily termed his Commands, the other his Decrees. Now what God commands, whether we think or will ſo or no, is certainly our Duty: we cannot alter the due Relations of our Actions to their Objects, no more than we can conceive that God will ever do it. And ſo our preſent and future Condition are and ſhall be what he decrees or appoints. The good or evil things we at preſent enjoy or ſuffer from the leaſt to the greateſt, are and muſt be all from him, whether we will acknowledge or ask or deprecate or thank him for them or no. Our future State of unſpeakable Happineſs or Miſery after a ſhort time ſhall be by his Sentence, which ſhall be paſſed upon us without our leave according as we have obſerved or violated his Commands, for all our affectation of Liberty and even Superiority. We be lawleſs? We the Governors and Judges of the World? What Sottiſhneſs is it in Mortals or any Creatures to affect ſuch things which are neither fit nor poſſible? Nor is it at all a ſign of a great Mind *to arrogate and aſpire to ſuch things for its own ſelf, not abiding it any where elſe; but rather of a ſtingy and contracted one, which refers all to it ſelf though never ſo little and contemptible.*

No Selfiſhneſs *can be great, except in him who is at leaſt virtually* all *himſelf, and upon whom all other Being and Happineſs neceſſarily depend. A great Mind is equally pleaſed with the exiſtence of Infinite Perfection (and conſequently of the greateſt Happineſs in the World either fit or poſſible) in any other as well as himſelf. It is indifferent to him where it be, ſo it be: he is infinitely in Love with it and rejoyceth in it: he deſpiſeth and hateth ſuch a* ſelfiſh *Temper as to wiſh it no where, becauſe it is not in himſelf.*

Wherefore there is nothing more inexcuſable, more odious and deſpicable than a licentious and proud and conſequently a negligent ungrateful diſobedient Creature towards God his and all the World's Maker and Univerſal Benefactor. To ſee Ignorance, Folly and Wickedneſs exalt it ſelf againſt Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and a pitiful Worm to wriggle his dirty Body, and turn up his contemptible Snout againſt Heaven, meer Impotency and Weakneſs which cannot ſtand of it ſelf to ſtrutt againſt Almighty Power: To ſee him defying and huffing at God, who muſt by and by ly ſprawling and grunting, and ſuffer himſelf to be inſulted over by every Fly and Worm: What can more move Indignation, Contempt, or Pity?

Theſe are the Creatures too who have made Religion and Piety, the Worſhip of their Maker, a Droll and Jeſt. Who have not only hated them,

but

but endeavoured to render them the Objects of their Contempt. A thing very easie to do. There is not the most excellent thing that may not be represented contemptible and ridiculous. For it is but observing something therein or related to it, which compared with others greater is really mean and small, or made to appear so: but to conceal what is truly great in it; as its being the cause of some small effect compared with others greater, or being like to something that is mean and contemptible. And in this consists the whole Art of Drollery. *Now there is nothing which hath not some such things belonging to it. Even God himself (with Reverence be it spoken) may by an Atheistical Witt when he shall hear it affirmed, that there is not the least Motion but what is produced and communicated by him only, be called contemptuously more than is convenient to be named, or* plenus negotii Deus, *as the Epicureans flouted, because it is in part like to a Man who impertinently prying into and employing himself about every trifling matter; though in very truth it is demonstrable, and it is absolutely necessary to Infinite Wisdom and Power that all things greatest and least together should be known to him, and proceed from him, and be dependent upon him: Nor can a Sparrow fall to the ground, as our Saviour saith, without his Providence.*

Now the Passions of Hatred and Contempt (as all other Passions) naturally furnish the Inven-

tion or cauſe to come to mind thoſe things which maintain them, and that is any miſchievous Quality or Imperfection: but they keep back or conceal any thing that may abate them. Whence it is manifeſt how eaſie it is for an ordinary Witt but proud and ſpiteful to render any thing it pleaſeth contemptible or odious. And thus may it do by Religion, obſerving only that it is reverenced by the poor and ignorant weak and fearful Minds: but not taking notice that it is in the moſt wiſe and generous, and that always the greateſt and wiſeſt Souls not influenced by any Appetites but thoſe of Truth *and* Right, *have had the moſt profound and ſerious Reverence and Love for it. But they can be none but thoſe who have no Underſtanding themſelves, which can ſuffer their Judgments and Affections to be determined by ſuch Perſons.*

To theſe it is Religious and Godly *are become the moſt ordinary words of ſcorn. But would one ever have thought that that which ſignifies ſomething appertaining to our Duty to our Maker ſhould have been ſo? Or that it ſhould not be deemed the moſt honourable Quality and Condition, to be a Servant to the infinitely Great, Wiſe, and good Soveraign of the Univerſe? In the mean time they may aſſure themſelves that there are ſome ſuch faithful Servants of God, who are ſo ſenſible thereof as to contemn and hate ſuch degenerate Souls, be they as big as they will, ſo far as they are the*

Cauſes

Cauſes or Subjects of ſuch Impiety; and yet ſeriouſly to pity them as capable of better things. Wiſe and vertuous Souls as much deſpiſe and deteſt hectoring Vice (though I ſay with deep compaſſion for the Perſons) as it can Religion and Piety.

Nor is this humour but too much among the rich and great only, but (as is uſual) the faſhion is followed by the inferiour ſort. And it is ordinary enough for them to think that they have wit and worth enough to deſpiſe Religion and the Prieſt. And although the Office if it be diſcretly and conſcientiouſly diſcharged, is certainly in it ſelf of all publick Employments, the moſt truly profitable to Mankind; the moſt uneaſie, painful, and ſolicitous to men, generally while in this fleſhly Life: yet by experience it ſeems at preſent, generally the moſt thankleſs, and even too much uſeleſs. For the bad examples of thoſe who adminiſter it, do a great deal of harm; and yet their good ones do little good. If they miſdemean themſelves (which cannot be too ſeldom) their faults are magnified and publiſhed with no good intent, but out of Envy, Contemptuouſneſs, or to juſtifie and excuſe mens own licentiouſneſs: But if they demean themſelves never ſo worthily and blameleſly, as if they only were by way of puniſhment bound to their good behaviour; their good example is little heeded, and leſs imitated. I think there are no Perſons in a Commonwealth who better deſerve what may be eſteemed

a reward, and consequently Honour and Revenue, than those who are constantly in any Employment, the effect of which is the publick good, and much more still if the Principle of it be so too: and yet often they are undervalued by those who enjoy themselves and live at their ease, and are only born to, or by some indirect means arrive at that which others better deserve.

But all this will little cool or abate the Aspires and Resolutions of a sincerely and generously virtuous Soul. Which although it knows very well what reward Virtue deserves for its Maintenance and Encouragement, and is well assured that how little soever it receives here (which it doth not much prize or envy) it shall not want what is fit sometime or other from the Governour of the World: Yet it would fain raise it self above all Personal considerations, and would please God, and do as much good as it can, though it were possible (as it is not) never to receive any thing for its pains.

Some of the seeming causes somewhat more particular and remote of the Neglect, Hatred, and Contempt of Piety, *besides that Universal one, the Pityable, Natural Ineptness to, and Averseness from Spiritual and Divine things in Men, and what hath been before observed, may be some such as these. Which I crave leave with all due Deference and submission to wiser observers but just to mention. Some want of Education of Persons designed for the Clergy in*

serious

ſerious and intelligent Piety; want of longer continuance in places allotted for that purpoſe, and of more careful examination of fit Qualifications before they are admitted to that Office: Want of more places for Retirement and Conſideration, where Men may learn to rectifie their Opinions, to Moderate and Govern their Paſſions, to Direct, Form, and Temper their Inclinations: Want of ſufficiency of Revenue for the ſufficient and deſerving Officers of Religion in very many Places, and eſpecially in almoſt all Corporations where their work is, and their worth ſhould be the greateſt, and there is moſt need, not only of Artificial but Natural Authority. Their Revenue alſo, eſpecially ſince Religion in general and the National Diſcipline in particular is ſo much neglected and ſlighted, conſiſting in moſt places of many and ſmall things is too ſolicitous and contentious. Their number likewiſe, both of Superiour and Inferiour ſort ſeems to be too ſmall, with us probably, computing the whole Nation, there will not be found above 5 or 6 Hundred, but in moſt Corporations and populous Towns, one to two, three or four Thouſand. And in ſome Proteſtant-Countreys, and particularly our next Neighbours, though they are a conſtituted Common-wealth, and flouriſh in Riches and Greatneſs: Yet I conjecture in ſome Cities, there is not one Clergy Man to five or ſix Thouſand, I ſpeak of their National Church, not of their

Diſſenters. I know there are ſome Lay-Elders as they call them, which may be ſome help to them. And this may be one cauſe of the increaſe both of Papiſts, and other diſſenters amongſt them (if it be true as hath been ſaid) notwithſtanding the advantages which thoſe of their Natio.al Church enjoy. But in thoſe places where the Romiſh Religion obtains, as in Italy, Spain *and* France *(in which laſt, I have ſome ground for my Conjecture) there may be about one to twenty or thirty. And in the Divine conſtitution of the Jewiſh Common-wealth, we know one whole Tribe was aſſigned for the Miniſtry of Religion, or Gods Worſhip; which might be then about a Fourtieth part of the whole people: And yet their Offices and Employments, if they be conſidered, will I think be found to require much leſs time and leiſure, than thoſe which are incumbent upon the Clergy in the Chriſtian Church.*

It is true, he may be of opinion that their number is already rather too great who ſeems to make that their only uſe and employment, which is ſometimes but the ſmalleſt part of it, viz. *to ſpeak to about a Thouſand Perſons at once, being as many as can conveniently hear in one place; though I think, if only that were performed as frequently and as well as would be beſt, it would require a greater number. Add to theſe the great neglect and even conculcation of Eccleſiaſtical Diſcipline both over Clergy and Laity,*

ty, eſpecially in Manners. To which I heartily wiſh there were not too great Encouragement in the Civil Government, by the Neglect of the Execution of its own very ſage and ſober Laws, and the undoing Examples of thoſe who are entruſted with it. * *The neglect alſo of the Religious Government of Families thoſe little Commonwealths of which the greater are compoſed, may be here reckoned. The Encouragement of judicious, plain, and affectionate Expoſition and Application of the Chriſtian Doctrine, or of* Preaching, *ſeems a very fit and proper Means for the Propagation and Advancement of Piety, as all Popular Orations, are for the Maintenance of the Eſteem and Practice of any Opinions or Actions. For whatever ſome pleaſe to think, ſo long as the nature of Man is what it is now, and they purſue all other things beſides Religion, with ſuch real and mighty paſſions as they do: If they be not frequently paſſionated for Religion and Piety too, it ſeems not likely that it ſhould ever* Naturally *be prevalent in the World. What God may otherwiſe do we know not.*

* Omne animi vitium tanto conſpectius in ſe — Crimen habet quanto is qui peccat major habetur.

If men would have no great affections in Religion, they muſt alſo bring Men to have none in other Affairs, or elſe they will betray it to looſe all its command and efficacy; but only there where men are little or nothing concern-

ed:

ed: Of this the Romaniſts, eſpecially in France, *ſeem very ſenſible, and therefore in ſome places are very diligent in preaching, but eſpecially zealous even beyond their Adverſaries: where their Auditors in their capital City (for other places I know little) are ſo numerous and attentive, that their Preaching and Catechiſing ſeemed to me the principal cauſe of the Reputation of their Church among the people, and that were it not for them, their Maß and all the reſt of their pompous Religion would not keep the beſt, if not the moſt of their Sheep from running out into their Neighbours paſture if both Gates were ſet open. This Preaching muſt not be like School-Boys Themes, or young Academicks Orations, or School-Lectures, But ſuch diſcourſe as is commonly uſed in the greateſt Affairs of humane life (not comparably ſo great as the reforming Mens manners and ſaving their Souls) as at the Bar, in the Senate; in ſerious and uſeful private Converſation: where men ſpeak in good earneſt to inform, convince and perſwade their Auditors. And becauſe the generality of men through the want of ability or good will, mind not ſo much Religious matters as the concerns of this life, it muſt be oftimes performed to do any great good with many, even ſtudied or allowed defects: which to ſome more witty than prudent for want of experience, and who think others too much like themſelves, may ſeem contemptible. It muſt be oftimes done*

done with frequent Repetitions and Inculcations, many homely Similitudes, many moſt eaſie and obvious Inferences and general Proofs: or elſe the greateſt part of Auditors, and even of thoſe who are of good underſtanding in other Affairs, will never take the pains themſelves to mind, underſtand, remember or be affected with what is delivered.

For the frequency of the performance of this Office, it ſeems neceſſary to augment the number of thoſe who are to diſcharge it, that ſo it might be done the better. The too often and frequent performance of it by one Perſon doth cauſe it to be done generally very meanly, and injudiciouſly, ſometimes very coldly and dryly, and ſometimes with a great deal of non-ſenſe and noiſe, to ſupply the place of ſound Senſe and diſcreet Affection: In ſumm, oftimes to little and ſometimes to bad purpoſe. Nor is it long ſince that this very mean performance of Preaching, was one principal cauſe why the Office was ſo ſhamefully invaded by every one who had a hot Head and great Lungs, with ſuch ſucceſs, as to be thought by themſelves and the people too, to be as good Preachers as the beſt; and even to be inſpired. For how elſe (thought they) could illiterate men Extempore equalize and exceed thoſe who had the advantage of Education and Study.

And as it may be of great uſe to multiply and encourage, accommodate and fit Inſtructers of the People: So it ſeems neceſſary that there ſhould

ſhould be ſome of more ſpeculative calm and ſubtill, and others of more prudent Tempers, who ſhould be the Judges and Determiners of the Truth of Doctrine and the Expediency of Diſcipline. For neither theſe Popular nor yet more Courtly Orators are uſually ſo fit for that: though generally they are apt to take it upon them, and often have done it, deſpiſing the other Sort of Perſons of fitter Qualities for it. They have much more pleaſed and been more applauded by the Generality of Men than the other; whence they have not only judged themſelves in general, more deſerving and valuable (which may be oft-times) but particularly more fit to be Governors and Directors, which hath ſeldom proved ſo. For commonly as they are Perſons of great and it may be good Paſſions: ſo they are but of general confuſed and narrow Appre henſion, and oft-times of too much employment; and beſides extraordinarily prejudiced by the frequency of their Zeal and other Paſſions to judge things true and great which are often not ſo. It ſeems certain they are very excellent and uſeful Inſtruments, but not ſo fit to be the uppermoſt Maſters and Governors. And we ſee Men ſenſible of this in Civil and Secular Matters, where every Haranguer is not thought fit to be a Judge or Privy Counſellor. Finally it is to be heartily wiſhed and endeavoured without the leaſt envy or contention, that every one might have Opportunity and juſt Encouragement to make uſe of his Talent

Talent greater or leſs in the Church of God and every where elſe for his Maſter's Service the doing of good. And as to direct and improve it for that End is every Man's greateſt Perfection, ſo it is we know the only Condition of his Reward.

But many of theſe things and many more ſeen in this our Age, to be rather wiſhed by thoſe who Cordially deſire the Propagation of Religion, than hoped that they ſhould be ſo much as taken into Conſideration. However, we may and ought by our humble & importunate Petition perpetually ſolicite the Great King and Lord of all things, that he would without or with what Means he pleaſeth erect his Kingdom in the Hearts of Rebellious Mortals, and diſpoſe their Souls to a free Obedience to his Laws howſoever promulgated or made known.

As for the following Treatiſe *to which this ſomewhat long* Preface *leads, It pretends to no great Matters: The Subject of it being the moſt common and beaten in our own Tongue, and a great part of it compoſed at firſt for a very plain Auditory; it cannot be expected but that a great many things which Occur therein ſhould be ordinary well known, and more vulgarly expreſſed in a dreſs ſuitable to it, and probably with too many little defects of ſtyle left hanging about them. Nor is it fit that in a Treatiſe of the whole argument they ſhould be omitted, provided they be but true and profitable though but to meaner capacities. Nevertheleſs I think I ſhall not be miſtaken*

ſtaken in ſaying that there are in it many things of good Importance not at all obſerved, many not ſo diſtinctly, many not ſo much with their reſpective Reaſons delivered by others.

If it ſhould be otherwiſe, and there ſhould be no valuable difference between this and other Diſcourſes of the ſame Subject in our Tongue: yet it might not be altogether ſuperfluous. For this might fall into the Hands of ſome and be read by them for ſome Conſideration or other, when others would not. I look upon ſuch Books as many Shops of the ſame Trade which ſell the ſame Commodities.

Though one might be ſufficient to furniſh all Buyers if they would come thither: yet many would omit their own Conveniencies and never buy at all, if there were not others nearer hand or in their way, or belonging to ſome Friend or Acquaintance.

Finally, if it ſhould happen that the ſame things may be had elſewhere better and with more advantage, I ſhall be ſeriouſly glad of it; and much more pleaſed at ſuch a reaſon of my Miſtake, than troubled at my Miſtake it ſelf. However it was thought beſt to err on the ſafeſt hand, and conſidered, that Superfluity doth leſs Harm than Want. I pray God it may be ſomewhat ſerviceable to his Honour and the good of Men.

G. B.

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A TREATISE CONCERNING PRAYER.

CHAP. I.

The Nature and Parts of Prayer.

SECT. I.

AS the Christian Religion is upon *many* accounts the most excellent, and it is to the most truly and perfectly wise and good Man (that is, one who best discerns and loves what is *true* and the most *beneficial* for the World) the most eligible thing to believe and practise it: So *particularly* it is so, because it hath made known, or confirmed and taught with so great certainty so many things for the Comfort, Solace, and Support of poor indigent and impotent humane Nature, both as to this present

and the future State. As in that great minded Diſcourſe of Jeſus's to his Diſciples concerning Divine Providence (*Matt.6.*) where it ſeems to be wondred at that Men ſhould be ſo ſolicitous and careful concerning the Neceſſities or Conveniencies of this preſent Life, when there was ſo eaſie and certain a way undoubtedly to obtain and ſecure them: *viz.* by being firſt the faithful Subjects and Servants of God, and particularly at that time as ſending his Laws and Commands by Jeſus himſelf, or by being ſincere Chriſtians. That it was not to be doubted in the leaſt but that God would provide for and take Care of his Servants in thoſe reſpects ſo much as was for their Good. And again, if they ſhould want them, and have evil things befal them, and undergo Afflictions; even this ſhall certainly be for their good: *For all things work together for the good of thoſe who love God.* And as to the future Life, the State after Death, and the Diſſolution of our Bodies into Duſt and Vapour, what great and magnificent things are told and aſſured us? ſuch as were never known at all, or not with any Certainty comparatively conſiderable before. A State ſo perfect and happy is promiſed, that nothing leſs than Glory and Crowns, and Kingdoms, and Joy and Life, the moſt admired and eſteemed things among us, are uſed to repreſent and ſignifie it. And all this upon the Condition of our preparations for it, by thoſe holy Diſpoſitions

ons in our Souls, of Righteouſneſs, of Love to the Univerſe at once, or as one, to God and to every Creature, that it may be as perfect and happy, as is conſiſtent with the greateſt Happineſs of the Whole (which is beſt known to infinite Wiſdom) of Self-denial, of perfect Mortification of Luſts, that is, of the *Inordinacy* and *Immoderacy* of all our Appetites. And yet further, that impotent Men may obtain theſe, the Conditions of all our other promiſed Happineſs both here and hereafter, God hath abſolutely promiſed us his Influence upon us for our Aſſiſtance to be, and Comfort in being holy and good, his Pardon and Forgiveneſs for the moſt eminent and illuſtrious Merits and Death of Jeſus, of all our paſt ſins and faults, when we are become good.

Among theſe, one very comprehenſively comfortable, as well as profitable Doctrine, is that which is taught concerning Prayer; (*viz.*) that all things, both thoſe of the future and of this Life too, if good for us, and it be reaſonable and juſt that they ſhould be particularly granted us; that is, if it be for the greateſt good of the whole Univerſe, of which God is the Maker, Suſtainer, and Governour (and to be ſo diſpoſed, as never to deſire any thing otherwiſe, is our own Perfection, and conſequently muſt needs be more joyous and delightful, than the contrary Diſpoſition of unjuſt-Sleſiſhneſs) I ſay, all ſuch things may upon our

Requeſt, ſuch as it ought to be, be obtained. Upon which account we are not only adviſed, but commanded to lay aſide every where all Solicitude, all anxious Care, uſing only calmly and cheerfully the juſt Prudence and Diligence, which we may judge the Goodneſs of every thing to deſerve, and dutifully commending our Deſires, and the Succeſs of our Endeavours to God, and perfectly acquieſcing in the Event, be it what it will. So is the Apoſtolical Precept, *Philip. 4. v. 6. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſt be made known unto God.*

Whether we in general implore the Divine Favour and Good-Will, and conſequently the Forgiveneſs of our paſt Miſcarriages, and Violations of his Laws; or whether we beg his gracious Aſſiſtance, to make us holy and good, and by this means capable of all the other Inſtances of his Bounty; Whether more particularly we deſire any excellent Ornament or Qualification of Soul, of Knowledge or Goodneſs, Gift or Grace, as uſually called; Whether our dull and confuſed Heads want Light and Clearneſs for the Diſcovery of Truth, or we would have the manifold unruly diſobedient Motions and Appetites of our Minds to be tamed, abated, and at our due Command, and our Breathings and Endeavours after Holineſs and Virtue excited and increaſed. Whether

ther we would have our Luſts abated and mortify'd, our Corruptions ſubdued, our Graces and Virtues quickned and ſtrengthned; Whether we would have the good things of this Life, as Health, Strength, Peace and Quiet, Plenty, Liberty, Good-name, Friends, Families, Relations; Whether with the ſolicitous Merchant, we would have our Adventures and Commodities come ſafe home, or with the Souldier, eſcape the Dangers and Hazards of a Battel; or with the induſtrious Tradeſman, we modeſtly deſire competent Cuſtom, honeſt faithful and juſt dealing, good Commodities, the Succeſs of our Labour and Skill; or with the Husbandman, proper Seaſons, plentiful Crops and Harveſts, and that we might reap the fruits of our Labours and enjoy them. In a word, In all things whether they be little or ſmall, and the moſt inconſiderable, as not being below God to take notice of; or they be great, and of the moſt valuable Conſequence, as not being too big for God Almighty to grant or bring to paſs, it is but making known humbly our Requeſt to God, and if our Deſires be good for us, and conſiſtent with God's Government of the World, or with the Univerſal Good (and we are mad and wicked Men if we put not in that Exception) we need not in any of theſe things be careful or ſolicitous, but be confident we ſhall not fail of Audience and Acceptance.

Wherefore I the more wonder, that that which is ſo vaſt and great a Priviledge to, and Security for poor impotent infirm and weak Humane Nature, inſufficient to defend it ſelf from, or to remove Griefs and Preſſures, and yet obnoxious almoſt to infinite in this Life, and deſtitute of ſo many good things it is capable of enjoying, ſhould be accounted by us a Task or Burthen. For we ſee in the World, a Man accounts himſelf to be, and able to do what he or his Friend is able to do by his Procurement. And if he be (as the beſt provided is much) indigent and in want, weak and inſufficient, obnoxious and expoſed to Evils; he ſupplies and enriches, fortifies and ſtrengthens, defends and ſecures himſelf by the Aid and Aſſiſtance of others his Friends. And who would not indefatigably labour to obtain, and abundantly rejoyce in, and conſtantly make uſe of ſuch a Friend as God, who is inſtead of all, who can do all, and infinitely more for us than all the World beſides; nay, we can have no Friends but from him, nor can any Creature do any thing without him: So that if he be our Adverſary, or forſake us, we muſt be utterly deſtitute and forlorn. But it is ſufficient for the preſent to hint the true Reaſons, (*viz.*) Ignorance of, or rather Non-attendance to our entire Dependency on God, ſo many ſecond Cauſes for the moſt part intercepting and ſtopping our Mind, and not permitting it to enquire

quire further, and to extend it ſelf to God; or elſe Wickedneſs, Men knowing that God Almighty *heareth not Sinners, but if a Man be a Worſhipper of God, him he heareth,* Joh.9.v.31. And that *the Prayer of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord, and the Sacrifice of the Wicked, how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked Mind,* Prov.21.v.27. And again, *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the Prayer of the Upright is his Delight,* Prov. 15. v.18. Again, *He that turneth away his Ear from hearing the Law, even his Prayer ſhall be an abomination,* Prov.28. v.9. And yet Men will not leave off to be Sinners and wicked; but it ſeems will chuſe rather to part with all their Intereſt in God himſelf, in infinite Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, than their Luſts, and that Delight and Pleaſure their corrupted and degenerated Souls perceive from them.

For there is no other Condition God requires, for the obtainment of this incomparable Priviledge, in all good things beſides Holineſs, but Holineſs, a good Mind, and well inſtructed to uſe all other things he ſhall give, to their right Ends of doing good and pleaſing God; which Condition too, God himſelf is the moſt ready of all to give when asked. Fooliſh Men! Were the Condition harſh in it ſelf, who would think it not eaſily to be perform'd, for ſuch a vaſt Priviledge and Advantage? But were it hurtful and grievous, and not abſo-

lutely neceſſary; upon our firſt Addreſs to God, he himſelf would remove it, or elſe the Priviledge would not be made good to us. But in truth, the Condition of *Holineſs* and *Goodneſs*, is the greateſt Good and Advantage to us; and the beſt uſe we can make of the Priviledge granted, is to ask it ſincerely and importunately: So cannot that infinite Goodneſs but heap and crowd good things together; nor could any thing that is now to us harſh and unpleaſant, proceed from him, or be enjoyn'd by him, if the Circumſtances of our miſerable, becauſe apoſtate State, did not make it a neceſſary profitable Good.

Caſt then away anxious Solicitude, do not any more tear and vex thy ſelf with briary and thorny Thoughts, let not buſie and unſleeping Cares prevent thy Reſt, or diſturb thy placid and compoſed Soul; love but God, make but thy Self by his Grace (which is ready for thee when duely deſired) good, and capable of his Favour, do alſo thy own endeavour in any Office, and uſe the beſt Prudence thou canſt, with an even and tranquil Mind, and then make known thy Requeſt to God thy Heavenly Father by Prayer and Supplication.

Ἕλλον γὰρ Διὶ χεῖρας ἀναστχέμεν ὃς κ' ἐλεήσῃ.

To lift up Hands to God above
Is ſurely good, for God is Love.

What

What is diſcourſed in this enſuing *Treatiſe* concerning Prayer, is in Anſwer to theſe Six Enquiries.

1. What is *Prayer* to God, and what is a *Prayer*, and the uſual Parts of which it doth or may conſiſt? or rather what things may be uſefully mixed with that which we moſt properly call Prayer, and the reaſons thereof.

Secondly, What the principal Sorts of Prayer?

Thirdly, What the Matter or Contents of Prayer?

Fourthly, What are the Excellent Uſes and Benefits of Prayer?

Fifthly, What good Directions may there be concerning it?

Sixthly, What are the Excuſes men uſually have why they do not pray in publike, private, ſecret?

SECT. II.

FIrſt, What is *Prayer*, &c. By *Prayer* therefore moſt ſtrictly may be meant nothing but a Deſire ſignified unto God, that he would grant or beſtow ſome good thing upon us; which may be either poſitive or privative, either that he would give us the Poſſeſſion of ſome good thing, or the Security or Deliverance from ſome evil thing; both which are good

good things. To ſignifie this our Deſire unto God, needs no more than to conceive the Deſire in our Souls; for God knows every Thought of our Hearts, every Motion of Soul, as ſoon as ever it is exiſtent. He that made and ſuſtains the Soul in Being, and therefore is always intimately preſent therewith, cannot be ignorant of all that is in it. Our Words, or other external Signs, are principally to ſignifie our Deſires to others, that they may have the ſame, and concur with us, if they pleaſe, or at leaſt may underſtand what we do deſire; or they are to help and aſſiſt our Conceptions of the Things we pray for, or to promote our Affections, with which they may be conjoyn'd, and for ſome other Reaſons.

A *Prayer* generally ſignifies many ſuch ſingle Deſires or Prayers, put and compoſed together, with the other uſual Additions, which are commonly called Parts of Prayer. Thoſe are ordinarily ſaid to be Confeſſion and Thankſgiving; ſo that a Prayer is made to conſiſt of three ſorts of Parts, (*viz.*) Confeſſion, Petition, Thankſgiving. But there is no reaſon to confine a Prayer to theſe Parts only, there may be other things as uſefully and properly introduced; ſuch as are Profeſſion of our Obedience, and of our Reſolutions to be good for the time to come, the devoting our ſelves thereto, the expreſs Acknowledgment and Belief of the Divine Perfections and Excellencies, the pro-

propoſal or calling to Mind the reaſons of our Deſires, and the ground of our Hopes, that they ſhall be fulfilled and performed. Finally, in general, any other Thing which may increaſe and augment our Deſire and Longing for what we would have, which Deſire is the very Eſſence of *Prayer*; and this is the very general reaſon, why in a *Prayer* all of them are to be introduced and admitted thereinto ſome more nearly, ſome more remotely. And hence we may eaſily Judg what is proper, and what is more or leſs impertinent thereto, that is, what doth and what doth not, and what doth more or leſs than another thing in its place obtain this End.

Some of the Things which are pertinent Parts of Prayer, may be theſe,

Firſt, An expreſs Attention and Acknowledgment of the Divine Perfections and Attributes.

Secondly, Confeſſion of paſt and preſent Faults and Sins.

Thirdly, A ſolemn Profeſſion of future Amendment and Obedience.

Fourthly, Thankſgiving, or actual Love to God, for his Favours already conferr'd and received.

Fifthly, A Rehearſal, Propoſal, or Explication of ones Wants, what a Man would have, or is ready to deſire, a more or leſs particular Declaration of a Man's Caſe, together alſo with

with the true Difficulty or Danger of it, and other the reaſons of our Deſire. And this not for God's ſake, that he might know them more diſtinctly, or the like, but for our own; that we might more adequately and diſtinctly, and longer attend to our own Neceſſities and Wants, our own impotent and mean and imperfect Condition, and conſequently more earneſtly deſire Relief; of which hereafter.

Sixthly, An expreſs Deſire and Petition, that God in theſe Caſes would relieve and help us.

SECT. III.

I. THerefore an expreſs Acknowledgment of, and Attention to the Divine Perfections and Attributes, to attribute and aſcribe them to God, that is, to Judge them to be in God. Such as are

1. His infinite Power, that he is abſolutely able to do any thing what he pleaſeth, and this at all times, and that he is uncontroulable; none is ſuperiour to him, to hinder or reſtrain him, nor that he needs any other thing or Perſon, but can do all things without them, and even they are all dependent upon him, all perfectly at his Command, ſubject to his Will and Pleaſure, even the higheſt and moſt perfect Creature. So far as we deny, or doubt, or

or are not assured of this, or do not take it for granted, so far it would cause us to Judge it impossible or less probable that our Desire should be effected; and this will either quite extinguish or flatten our Desire: for no Man ever surely desires what he Judgeth an Impossibility. And as for that which he hath no more reason to judge he may than he may not obtain by his Prayer, mostwhat he will not trouble himself about it, much less still about what he judgeth less probable. Or if he may venture a Prayer, as it were, it will be mostwhat very coldly, and not often: or in general, the Prayers will be such whose Pains are not more than the Probability of Success.

Secondly, An Acknowledgment of his Infinite All-comprehending Knowledg. That all things past, present and to come, possible and impossible, are always present to his Infinite Mind&Understanding;that therefore he always know's what's absolutely best to be done, or for the Universal Good, and therefore Just; and that when any Desire or Prayer is propounded unto him, he can never be ignorant or doubt whether it be to be granted or not, and how far, and therefore cannot upon that account refrain or delay; as we know it may be in the wisest of Men, nay in the most perfect of finite Creatures, Saints and Angels, unless it should be revealed to us that God would alwaies

alwaies make it known unto any of them whether any Desires which were proposed to them were just or unjust; as it is certain he hath not. And again, That he being thus Infinite in Knowledg, all the Desires of our Heart though signify'd by no external Signs, in all Places at all Times are perfectly seen by him Nay all the least Motions and Operations of our Souls, as of all other Spirits both in Heaven and Earth, are all open and plain to this Omnipresent and All-pervading Mind and Spirit *God*; the most imperfect, unformed, confused Desires of our Souls by Sighs and Groans sometimes expressed, are not hid from him Nay, He sees our *Thoughts afar off*, and knows what they will be, as the Scripture affirms. Wherefore we are sure he hears us and knows our Desires, and we do not in the least doubt of it: If we did, our Belief and Confidence that we shall receive what we ask, would so far fail, and consequently our Prayers or Desires so far sink, grow cold and flat. This is the most proper and pertinent use of this Acknowledgment of the Divine Wisdom in Prayer.

But there are several others by the by, and therefore still make it the more reasonable. As (the Divine Holiness supposed) it engageth us to Sincerity of Intention in our Prayers; that be sure we do not ask any thing, with any mixture of wicked and unallowable Intention, to gratifie

gratifie any Luſt or unlawful Appetite, that we may ſecretly deſign or glance at only, and not openly or long attend to; as if a Man ſhould ask of God Riches, that he might have wherewithal to live in Luxury or Intemperance, or to maintain other ſenſual Luſts, or to be equal or ſuperiour to others, to oppreſs them, to gratifie his Envy or Revenge; or as if we ſhould pray to God, to keep us from the more groſs and more ſcandalous Sins of the World, and that we might do our Duties more to him, perform our Religious Duties (ſuppoſe of Prayer, Hearing, Reading) that we might be a holy People externally, nay in internal Actions too, (though ſo far as we do this, we clean contrary render all bad we do) with a ſecret and ſly Intention and Deſign, that we might have Reputation for our Sanctity, be thought well of by ſuch and ſuch, and conſequently gain Riches, Preferment, *&c.* that we might be better than others. whom we have ſome Anger or Envy againſt, for ſome Difference in Perſwaſion, *&c.* and conſequently diminiſh their Credit or Reputation, and advance our own, and propagate ſome Way or Opinion becauſe ours, not becauſe we ſincerely ſee it for the Good of Mankind, and therefore pleaſing to God. When we expreſly acknowledge, and attend to it, that God knows theſe ſly and conceal'd Ends, Intentions and Deſigns of our Hearts, and withal knowing him to be righteous

ous and holy, this deters us therefrom, leſt inſtead of being heard, we ſhould be puniſhed for this our Inſincerity or Hypocriſie. For Men know, that *the Sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked Mind.* Nay, the Acknowledgment of the Divine Wiſdom in our Prayers, engageth us not only to Sincerity of Intention in our Prayers, but to an univerſal Holineſs. So far forth as we are conſcious to our ſelves, of our ſincere Deſires to be good, ſo much more is our Confidence in God, and conſequently our Deſires more heightned: But ſo far as we know any Sin in our ſelves indulged, allowed, approved, neglected to be reformed, ſo much leſs reaſon and confidence we ſhall have, that God will hear us, or be good to us in any kind, when we expreſly mind our ſelves that God ſeeth and knoweth it. How dareſt thou that haſt vile Thoughts, Deſigns, Affections, Inclinations, ſecret Actions, all as well known to God, as if they were expoſed to the Meridian Sun, ask any thing of him, or ſo much as think of him? And ſhouldeſt thou not fear, that he ſhould puniſh thee for thy Impudence and Diſhonour thou doeſt him?

3. An Acknowledgment of the Divine *univerſal Goodneſs* or Righteouſneſs, which in effect is all one; his always doing that, which is for the greateſt *Perfection* and *Happineſs* of all that

that he hath made considered together. This gives us Assurance (and consequently emboldens our Desires) that every thing that is *righteous* and *just* (a Condition we are always to remember in our Prayers) shall be effected and granted. And here we may take notice of the two Branches (for so they are) of his universal Goodness or Righteousness, *viz.* his *Justice*, properly so called, and his *Mercy*. The first is the Method of effecting the *Universal Good*, by permission and inflicting of Evil. The last, by bestowing of Good.

The good use of the former is, as hath been said, to engage us to all sincerity and purity of Heart, when we approach him with our Prayers and Desires. For he is so good to the World, that when he sees fit, he will also certainly punish wicked persons and sinners; which may be sometimes by taking away what they have already received and enjoy; but much more by the denial of their Petitions for any thing they want. And so likewise God's mercy engageth us to be good, if we would have so great a favour from him as the granting our Petitions. For God is no more merciful, than he is just, at random: but so as is for the best government of the World, or for the greatest good thereof: and therefore he is principally so to those who are good, to those who obey and serve him. God indeed may sometimes see it good to be-

ſtow good things upon bad men: but it is very little probable that he ſhould give to a bad man any particular good thing becauſe asked by him at any particular time. Nay the contrary is far more probable; *viz.* That he ſhould deny and reject his petition as a ſign of his juſt diſpleaſure againſt him. And this the conſciences of wicked men very often let them know, and make them afraid and aſhamed to ſend up the leaſt deſire to God; or if they do, 'tis with a ſtrange faintneſs and indifferency, as if they little hoped it ſhould be accepted and return with ſucceſs. Moreover, God's mercy (as hath been ſaid of his univerſal goodneſs or righteouſneſs) gives us particular aſſurance of his granting our deſires for any thing that is good for us, if it be juſt and conſiſtent with or rather part of his *univerſal Goodneſs*, or his goodneſs to the whole World. That he is not tyrannical, imperious, cruel, envious to the meaneſt of his creatures: but that every thing which can and ought to be done, ſhall be done for us. Now the expreſs belief hereof together with his infinite Wiſdom and Power begets in us aſſured hope and truſt for the granting our juſt Prayers, and conſequently enlivens and encourages them. And in ſome caſes God himſelf hath told us, that it is juſt for him to hear our Prayers; as when we pray for pardon of ſin for Chriſt's ſake upon

upon our ſincere repentance, and for grace to repent: Things of ſo great conſequence to us that we need not be much ſolicitous concerning any other. Where we have not the certain aſſurance of the juſtice of our deſires we muſt only propoſe them with reference to the divine wiſdom: As it is in the caſe of Health, Riches, Honour, Parts, Gifts, nay all inſtances of power or ability to do any thing whatever, unleſs it can any where appear to us, that God hath by Revelation or Reaſon in ſome particular caſes promiſed them to us.

And here it may be uſeful and proper to reflect upon the ſeveral ways or inſtances of God's Mercy, as they are alſo of his Power and Wiſdom: ſuch as his making, ſuſtaining, providing for all his Creatures in all reſpects, his affording Means, Helps, and Aſſiſtances of being *good* and *wiſe*, and keeping Men from being bad; the external ones of Direction, Inſtruction, Example; the internal of the immediate Influences of his Spirit upon Mens Underſtandings, Conſciences, Affections, Inclinations; God's forbearance and long-ſuffering till Men do repent, which may be more eſpecially taken notice of; And laſtly, all or any (more particularly as occaſion may be) the Conveniencies, Commodities, good things of this Life, as Health, Strength, Plenty, good-Name, Friends, Deliverance from Evils or Dangers, all which will ſtill

more evidently prove to us, and cauſe us longer to attend to, and more clearly to ſee, and more ſenſibly and ſtrongly to be affected with the divine Mercy and Bounty: That indeed the *Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*: That he is *merciful, gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth.* If God be not good, whence are theſe and all other good things to the World? Since God is infinitely powerful and knowing to do what he pleaſeth, what can be the cauſe, beſides his goodneſs, that there is any thing in the World but the extreameſt miſery? Hence conſequently our Faith (that is, our Belief and Truſt) and then our Deſires will be ſtrengthened and emboldned.

Here too we may make a Reflection upon God's Veracity or his Goodneſs in performing his Promiſes, which in the *Old Teſtament* is very often called by the Names of *Faithfulneſs* and *Truth*. We may reflect generally upon God's Goodneſs in the performance of what he hath ſaid, and therefore of his Promiſes, and more eſpecially upon thoſe Promiſes which concern Perſons in our particular caſes, if it appear there are any, he hath any way by Revelation or Reaſon made known and ſignified to us. Here further we may call to mind the paſt Inſtances of God's Mercy and Bounty to us, and principally thoſe which

which are the moſt like that which we now petition for. The Reaſon is, becauſe that which hath been done or come to paſs hath more of probability that it may and will be done again, than that which hath not. Wherefore this alſo will confirm our Faith, and conſequently encourage our Deſire or Prayer. Of this there are many Examples in the Scripture, eſpecially in the *Pſalms*.

But beſides this more proper and pertinent uſe and effect of the expreſs Acknowledgment and Recital of the Divine Perfections and Attributes in Prayer, and ſome few others mentioned, we may add here in ſhort only that it cauſeth us to admire the Divine Perfections, to honour and reverence God in the moſt real and ſerious manner, and in the higheſt degree we are capable of, to love him freely, chearfully, earneſtly, ardently, with all our ſouls, with all our might, all the ſtrength and vigour of our ſpirits; all which is extraordinary delightful, and only ſatisfactory to the ſoul of Man.

And if we leave out God, we can no where find comparably the like. God hath made us capable of the moſt intenſe and raviſhing Pleaſure in this enjoyment of himſelf, that is, in the employment of the operations of our Minds about him, than which, together with imitation of him, we know nothing better or greater. A whole Univerſe without

God or infinite Perfection is nothing comparatively: And if we give our Minds leave to enquire, and be at leiſure long enough to think, our Minds can find ſatisfaction, or repoſe no where elſe.

The reaſon of which is, that there is nothing beſides infinite, which is ſo great, but that we can conceive, and conſequently deſire ſomething greater.

And this, among others, is one chief reaſon, why the Exerciſe of Prayer is ſo pleaſant and ſweet to a Mind diſpoſed to this Converſation and Communion with God; to make up which compleat on God's part, he may at the ſame time have particular Influence upon our Souls.

Further, This expreſs Acknowledgment of and Converſation conſequently of our minds with God ſpiritualizes our Minds, makes them by Uſe and Exerciſe more capable of apprehending and being affected with all Spiritual things, as God himſelf and his Perfections, our own Souls, and what belongs to them, Virtue and Vice, Holineſs and Sin, the Rewards and Puniſhments of Heaven and Hell, the future States.

Again, This alſo enlarges and widens our Minds, makes us to be capable of and deſire and breath after the moſt excellent and perfect Objects; it makes us have an Opinion of the ſmalneſs and meanneſs of all other things

things below God, and therefore of all things that are temporary and proper to this Life, to deſpiſe them comparatively, to aſpire and breath after the greateſt Perfection of Life and State we are capable of, things every way as near infinite as we can. And therefore a ſoul that hath been able to be much or long thus employ'd, converſeth with worldly things with a kind of condeſcenſion, and more out of neceſſity of this humane life, (chearfully notwithſtanding acquieſcing in it as the divine Will) than out of choice. But of this more particularly hereafter.

Again, It begets in us Humility, and maintains it, whilſt we cannot avoid ſometimes reflecting upon and comparing our ſelves with God, to whom, what a nothing are we when we are cloathed with our beſt qualities, and adorned with our moſt beautiful Plumes, for which we are ſo apt to be immoderately taken with, and to have too great an opinion of our ſelves. Whilſt alſo we take notice we have nothing from our ſelves, but are fain to be Beggars and Almspeople for all we have. God the Almighty and All-good is the great Father and Houſholder of all the World, his Family; And neither we nor any thing elſe have the leaſt Crum of Bread but what is by his Proviſion and Appointment.

And laſtly, To name no more, all this Con-

verſation of our Minds with God, diſpoſeth us certainly to an univerſal Imitation and Obedience, and conſequently to univerſal Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, to all manner of Virtue and Goodneſs in the greateſt ſincerity, generoſity and conſtancy, (for ſo he is, and ſo he hath commanded) and conſequently to our own Perfection and Happineſs, by procuring of, and being inſtrumental to, according to our own Meaſure and Proportion, *the greateſt good of the whole*, the laſt end of all Being and Action.

And theſe are the Reaſons of this part of Prayer, of ſome of which again, and more in another general Head.

Of this firſt thing in Prayer, we have every where Examples in the Scriptures. In the Lord's Prayer our Addreſs is made to God by the name of *Father*, which is to put us in mind of the tender goodneſs of God in producing us, ſuſtaining us, providing for us conſtantly, educating and bringing us up, providing Portions for us hereafter. And the firſt Petition is, That his Name may be hallowed, that is, that we might have a due Opinion of, and a juſt, and therefore a peculiar Honour for him, whereby he is ſeparated from all other things. But eſpecially that which is called the Doxology, *For thine is the Kingdom*, &c. is nothing but this ſolemn acknowledgment of God's Excellencies;

cies; and it is ſet down as a Reaſon of the preceding Petition, *Deliver us from Evil*, *For thine is the Kingdom*, &c. that is, Thou indeed art King emphatically, thou haſt right and power to grant theſe things: And *thine is the Power*, Thou indeed art powerful, to thee eminently belongs Power; for in thee it is infinite, ſupream, uncontroulable, nay all Power is thine. *Thine is the Glory*, that is, All glorious things for which one is to be praiſed, extolled, honoured, glorified, (an ordinary *Hebrew Metonymy*) are in thee, and appertain to thee, and therefore we ought to pray unto thee.

So when the Apoſtles and Diſciples were to chooſe either *Barſabas* or *Matthias* by Lot into the place of *Judas*, they prayed and ſaid, *Thou, Lord, which knoweſt the Hearts of all Men, ſhew whether of theſe two thou haſt choſen.* To their Petition they premiſe an Acknowledgment of God's Omniſcience, very proper to that Petition: they deſired that God would chooſe, and that becauſe he knew certainly which was fitteſt to be choſen, *Acts* 1. *Verſe* 24. Another Inſtance of a pretty long Prayer of the Diſciples we have, *Acts* 4. *Verſe* 24. When *Peter* and *John* were commanded by the Rulers, the Elders, Scribes and High Prieſt, that they ſhould not ſpeak nor preach in the Name of Jeſus, but threatned them probably with Death or very ſevere

vere Puniſhment if they did; their Prayer or Petition was, That God would behold their Threatnings, and grant to them, that notwithſtanding they might with all boldneſs ſpeak God's Word; to which they premiſe God's infinite Power and Wiſdom in the creating of all things, and his Providence in foreſeeing them; that therefore he knew what was then done or deſigned, and was powerful to ſecure them from all their malicious and ſevere threats, and to bear up their courage againſt them, yea and againſt the Execution of them too. *Ver.* 24. *Lord, thou art God which haſt made Heaven and Earth, and the Sea, and all that in them is.* In the Old Teſtament read *Hezekiah*'s Prayer, when *Sennacherib*, King of *Aſſyria*, ſent that blaſphemous and vaunting inſolent Letter to him; *Let not thy God in whom thou truſteſt deceive thee, &c.* Kings 2. 19. 10. and *Verſe* 15. *&c.* He prays, *O Lord God of* Iſrael, *who dwelleſt between the Cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the Kingdoms of the Earth; Lord bow down thine ear and hear, open thine eyes and ſee, and hear the words of* Sennacherib, *which hath ſent him to reproach the living God,* (in oppoſition to the dead Idols, whether the Images themſelves, or inanimate things, or dead perſons repreſented by them.) And *Verſe* 19. *Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beſeech thee, ſave thou us out of his hands, that*

all

all the Kingdoms of the Earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only. He premiſes the expreſs Acknowledgment of the Divine Supream and Uncontroulable Power to his Petition, both as an Honour to his God, and a cauſe of Confidence and Faith in himſelf, and conſequently of his petitioning God. And this eſpecially was moſt ſeaſonable, where there was ſome Power, *(viz.)* that of *Sennacherib* and his falſe Gods oppoſed to the true God, and which indeed had prevailed againſt the reputed Gods of other Nations, which were in truth no Gods. And ſo it is always moſt proper where there is any thing that ſeems to flatten or weaken our deſire, there to take notice of ſome Attribute in God juſt contrary, which may eaſily excite and embolden it.

In *David*'s *Pſalms* nothing more frequent, and particularly in the 86. *Pſalm:* Read the whole *Pſalm* at leiſure, *Verſe* 5. After ſeveral Petitions, he ſtrengthens and confirms his Faith and Prayer, by the Conſideration of the Divine Goodneſs; *For thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in Mercy unto all them that call upon thee:* And *Verſe* 8,9,10. from the conſideration of his Supream Power; *Among the Gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy Works. All Nations whom thou haſt made ſhall come and worſhip before thee, O Lord, and ſhall glo-*

glorifie thy Name. For thou art great, and doeſt wondrous things; thou art God alone. *Verſe* 13. is a particular Acknowledgment of God's Mercy, and a Reflection upon his paſt Goodneſs to *him, For great is thy Mercy towards me, and thou haſt delivered my Soul from the loweſt Hell.* That is, my Life from the low Grave, or from Death. And laſtly, *Verſe* 15, 16. *But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compaſſion, and gracious; long-ſuffering, and plenteous in Mercy and Truth. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me,* &c. The Reader may himſelf eaſily obſerve many places in theſe Excellent *Pſalms*; and I cite theſe Examples, to give him an occaſion of obſerving theſe, and ſuch like places of the Scripture.

And to make our Apprehenſions of God's infinite Excellencies and Perfections more clear and ſtrong, we may here mention or take notice of our own Infirmities, Weakneſſes, or Imperfections, that ſo by the apprehenſion and compare of theſe contraries we may the more clearly apprehend the Greatneſs of the other. It will alſo well come in as a diſtinct Particular juſt after this, or immediately before our Petitions to render them ſtill more earneſt and ardent, becauſe we do not uſe to ask of any one, or at leaſt importunately, when we can probably or poſſibly have it done elſewhere, and leaſt of all if we can do it our ſelves.

Nay,

Nay, here we may mention and reflect upon the inſufficiency of all the Creatures in the World without God and independent upon him, to help us and do us good; and that what they can do is only by his power and appointment. And that therefore there is a Neceſſity of God's Help, or we muſt be quite helpleſs; This neceſſity of having all from God, will ſtill make our Deſires more importunate particularly towards him: But more of this hereafter.

II. The ſecond Action or Operation of Soul in a Prayer, is generally Confeſſion. For ſometimes this Part, as alſo others of Prayer, except Petition, may be omitted or uſed more ſparingly according as the Occaſion is. By which I mean (as in all parts of Prayer) not Words, or any other external Actions or Poſtures, but an expreſs Attention to, and Judgment that we are or have been guilty of ſome Sins or Faults directed and propoſed to God, which ſuppoſes a free and impartial Diſallowance, Diſapprobation and Diſlike, and conſequently a Determination and Reſolution of Soul to quit and abandon them, and to do ſo no more. An expreſs and willing Judgment concerning our ſelves, that we are guilty of ſome things which are not reaſonable and cannot be juſtified, is certainly, I ſay, a ſign of a preſent changed Mind and Reſolution

tion to be guilty no more; for what we have no mind to leave, and yet know it not justifiable, we conceal it from others and ourselves too, as much as we can, and will not attend to it, nor take notice of the unreasonableness and iniquity of it, lest we should be engaged and pulled by contrary Appetites, (as that of good Opinion of others and of ourselves concerning our selves, and that of Virtue, Justice, Right, often signified by the name of *Conscience*, (of which last there is somewhat in the worst of Men) to leave that which we love better, and be disturbed in the enjoyment of it, and consequently possess it with less delight and satisfaction.

After this Change of mind, must needs also succeed a hatred and aversation from the sin for the time to come, and a serious and sincere sorrow that we have been so foolish, unreasonable, unhappy for the time past; on set purpose that we may be the more cautious, and flee more therefrom for the future.

This Confession is very proper in Prayer, for it doth strengthen and embolden our desires thus: It is a sign to us of a serious and real goodness in us, as I have just now said; and what is so, confirms our Faith and Hope of God's particular goodness to us, and that we are more capable of his Favours: As being conscious to our selves of the Badness and Wicked-

Wickedneſs of our Temper, of too great kindneſs for any ſin, weakens and oppreſſes them. For we all naturally know God is righteous and good to the World, and that it is moſt for the good government of it, that he ſhould put good men into a good, and bad men into a bad condition; that it ſhould be well with the one, and ill with the other generally. But now what confirms our Faith and Hope, emboldens our deſire; what weakens and ſinks them, and makes it leſs probable we ſhould obtain any thing, though we ſhould deſire it never ſo importunately, cools and allays our deſire too.

And here the more comprehenſive and particular and accurate our Confeſſion is, ſo that we conceal not the leaſt Fault, but take notice even of ſmall ones; the more it is alſo principally of the greateſt and fouleſt, the moſt dear pleaſant and delightful ſins, the more it is of the aggravating circumſtances of any ſin, that is, of thoſe things which are ſigns of a greater degree of ſinfulneſs in us, (ſuch as are, being againſt great means to be better, againſt much knowledge both of our duty and of the miſchievous conſequences of our ſins, againſt the divine bounty, clemency, or juſtice, or the like) I ſay the more our Confeſſion is thus performed, the more ſtill it is a ſign of a greater degree of ſincere and real goodneſs, and conſequently ſtill more

more confirms and ſtrengthens both our hope and deſires.

Beſides this more immediate and proper uſe thus of Confeſſion, there are alſo many others. As that it is an exerciſe of our diſapprobation, hatred, ſorrow of and for ſin, and conſequently confirms it, and our reſolution to be good, or it ſtrengthens us in goodneſs. The more often we attend to the uglineſs and unreaſonableneſs of ſin, and are affected with actual hatred and ſorrow for it, the more ſhall we be reſolved againſt it, earneſtly deſire to prevent it, eſpecially what we may be in moſt danger of, to be purified and purged from what we have ſtill remaining in us, to have it quite extirpated out of our minds, never to have it come near us again, as he that hath and underſtands the danger of the Plague, or ſome killing infectious Diſeaſe. Moreover, a hearty and free Confeſſion, if we have been guilty, gives us a great deal of comfort and joy and eaſe in ourſelves, as an evidence and ſign of goodneſs in us, and conſequently that we are in a ſafe condition. The ſame which that pious Soul *David* ſeems to affirm of himſelf, *Pſal.* 32. *Verſe* 3, 5. *Whilſt I kept ſilence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long.* Probably he particularly refers to his two great ſins, in which he lay for ſome time, concealing them and paſſing them over as well

well as he could, but his conſcience could not alwayes be quiet, he was ſometimes full of fear and ſhame, and ſadneſs and anxiety, and ſecret complaints. But then in the 5th *Verſe*, he acknowledged his ſin unto God, and his iniquity he did not hide, he confeſſed his tranſgreſſions unto the Lord, and God forgave him. As the other cauſed great diſquiet, this gave him eaſe. Beſides, it begets and maintains in us ſome branches of humility; it gives us a juſt and true opinion of our ſelves, of our imperfections, as well as perfections; it makes us more ſee and acknowledge our obligations to and dependence upon God; it makes us leſs faſtuous and unreaſonably contemptuous of others compared with our ſelves; It makes us more to obſerve, and be ſenſible of the deſert of the great puniſhment due to ſin (God's goodneſs not conſidered;) and more earneſtly, to deſire and ſue for pardon and forgiveneſs from God, and more to reckon our ſelves obliged to him, and more to love him for it, when granted; all which have further good effects ſtill.

The Examples of this in Scripture are frequent, ordinary and well known; as in *Nehemiah*'s Prayer, (*Nehem.* 1.) for God's acceptance and favour in general to him and the *Jews*; and particularly, that he would give him favour with the King of *Perſia*, that

he might go and build *Jeruſalem*. He confeſſeth, that *he and his Fathers had ſinned, had dealt corruptly and proudly againſt God, and had not kept his Commandments:* A more large and particular confeſſion of the *Levites*, is in the 9th *Chapt.* of *Nehem.* In *David's Pſalms* are every where Examples, eſpecially when he prays for the pardon of his ſins: in *Pſalm* 51. he earneſtly importunes God for the forgiveneſs of his two great ſins, *Verſe* 3, 4, 5. and then follows, *I acknowledge my tranſgreſſions, and my ſin is ever before me.* And more generally, the corruption or depravation of his nature (it ſeems the moſt probable, as it is a true ſenſe) is confeſſed by him, *Behold, I was ſhapen in Iniquity, and in ſin did my Mother conceive me.* And *Pſalm* 79. *Verſe* 5. *O God thou knoweſt my fooliſhneſs, and my ſins are not hid from thee.* He petitions God for help and deliverance, both before and after. And here, after confeſſion, it may be ſeaſonable to ask God pardon for the ſame faults we confeſſed, and conſequently that we may be the more capable of his favour in granting the other Petitions we ſhall make to him at the ſame time.

SECT.

SECT. V.

III. A Third Ingredient of Prayer, is Profeſſion of future Obedience. An expreſs devoting our ſelves to God's will, and conſequently to all inſtances of goodneſs and holineſs. An actual reſolution directed to God, that we will not be any more guilty of thoſe faults we confeſſed, nor any other to the utmoſt of our power. This, if it be ſincere, is uſually accompanied with a very ſerious and earneſt intreaty, and beſeeching of God's grace and aſſiſtance for that end, and a dependency upon him, and truſt in him for it. Now this proceeds from the ſame habitual temper of mind that free confeſſion did, which ſometimes may be preceded alſo by ſome actual reſolution; but here it is more expreſs. Here is excited on purpoſe by the ſoul her ſelf, an actual inclination, will and reſolution, determination, bent purpoſe of particular and univerſal obedience. The principal reaſon of this is the ſame with the former, and in the ſame manner, it ſtrengthens and emboldens our Petitions and Deſires. For this expreſs and vigorous devoting our ſelves to obedience to God, is certainly an evident ſign to our ſelves of ſo much goodneſs in us, and conſequently that we are more capable of God's favour, and that it is more conſiſtent

with his univerſal goodneſs, righteouſneſs or diſtributive juſtice to beſtow good things upon us, and particularly this which we now ask from him.

This further therefore excites in us an Opinion or Faith, and conſequently Truſt, that our Petitions may and will be granted, which, as I before ſaid, confirms and ſtrengthens our Deſire. Whereas on the contrary, finding the Soul backward and detracting, loth and withdrawing it ſelf from this frank Obedience to God, as having ſome ſin it knows well, and is unwilling to leave, makes a Man very juſtly aſhamed and afraid to ask of God any thing. And here we ſhall do well to have a ſpecial care we do not coſen our ſelves by a raſh and heedleſs, or premeditated Forgetfulneſs and Non-attendency, out of Self-flattery or Pride; and think and proteſt we do moſt univerſally quit our love to every ſin, and give up our ſelves to divine Obedience; when, if we took time and carefully examined, we might find ſomething for the preſent, (it may be many Luſts) unmortified, which upon Occaſion would be too hard for our Obedience. Nor may it be amiſs to remember that there may be ſome luſt, which we might never have had the experience of, and conſequently which we cannot diſcover with ſtricteſt examination. Have we a care alſo that we do not miſtake

in

in the Nature of Goodneſs, its Inſtances and Degrees: and confuſedly fancy and conceit our ſelves good, when we are not ſo, or much more ſo than we are; and that we being therefore without doubt very dear to God, he muſt needs hear us; a thing but too frequent. Wherefore much Care and much Modeſty well becomes us, and we ſhould refer our ſelves to God who perfectly knows the habitual Frame and Temper of our Minds after our own beſt Examination of our ſelves.

But beſides this Principal and moſt proper Reaſon, there are alſo (as before) ſome others. As that this ſtrong and vigorous Act of our Souls confirms and ſtrengthens their habitual Inclination to Goodneſs. This alſo confirms in us and makes more ready at hand the Opinion of God's Univerſal Goodneſs and Juſtice, and engageth us to expect nothing from the Hand of God asked or unasked, except we be in ſome degree good. Examples of this are very frequent in the *Pſalms*. *Pſalm* 7. *Verſe* 1. *David* prays to God to ſave him from his Enemies, *Save me from all them that perſecute me, and deliver me.* And *Ver.* 6. *Ariſe, O Lord, in thine Anger; lift up thy ſelf, becauſe of the rage of mine Enemies.*

But *Verſ.* 3, 4. he reflects upon his paſt Innocency, and particularly in ſomething his Enemies or his Conſcience might ſuggeſt whether he was not guilty, and upon the

greatneſs of his Goodneſs and Charity; that he had not only done good to his Friends, but even to his cauſleſs Enemies; [and ſurely he judged himſelf to be ſtill the ſame, and that he was not changed for the worſe] which without doubt gave him humble Boldneſs and Confidence of ſucceſs, and conſequently was the cauſe of the Earneſtneſs and Strength of his Deſire, that God would be pleaſed at that time to do that favour for him. *O Lord, my God, if I have done this* [that is, it may be, ſomething his Enemies might accuſe him of, or his Conſcience bid him to enquire into; or more particularly, if he had done that to them, which they did to him, *(viz.)* perſecuted them, and endeavoured and contrived to do them miſchief cauſleſly] *If I have rewarded evil to him that was at peace with me, (viz.)* his Friends, or who had done him no hurt: *Yea I have delivered him who without cauſe is mine Enemy: Then let the Enemy perſecute my Soul, yea let him tread my Life down in the Earth, and lay mine Honour in the Duſt.* If *David* had been conſcious to himſelf of the like Injuſtice, or of any other Sin approved; that he had been, was, and would be ſo for the future; he would not have had the Confidence to have deſired this of God. And ſo in many places where he prays to God for ſome Favour, he profeſſeth himſelf God's ſervant; *Pſalm* 86. *Verſe* 4. *Rejoyce the Soul*

of

of thy Servant. *Verſe* 11. He prays to God, *to teach him his way, and he would walk in his Truth.* That which was truly God's Way, and was truly right and to be done. And *Verſe* 12. he profeſſes he would praiſe God and glorifie his Name; which were Signs and Branches of his Goodneſs. And then *Verſe* 16. he prays, *O turn unto thy Servant, and ſave the Son of thine Handmaid.* *Pſal.* 119. *Verſe* 94. *I am thine, ſave me, for I have ſought thy Precepts.* He had endeavoured and deſired to obey God, and he had given himſelf up to him *(I am thine)* (or God had eſpecially deſign'd him to ſerve him in the Kingdome) therefore he was bolder to pray God would ſave him, or deliver him from the Evils he was in danger of. And *Pſalm* 143. *Verſe* 12. *Of thy Mercy cut off mine Enemies, and deſtroy all them that afflict my Soul* (Suppoſe them ſo to continue as long as they had life, and were able, and not to repent) *for I am thy Servant.* And this is the beſt ſort of Vows, when a Man not only upon Condition that God will give him any certain thing he craves, expreſly wills and obligeth himſelf to do this or that particular good Work, or abſtain from this or that Fault or bad Action: but before-hand he gives up himſelf entirely to God, and vows and promiſes he will be his ſervant univerſally; and more particularly it may be too, where he thinks he may do

the moſt good, or where he hath been the moſt faulty: And as for his Deſires and Requeſts, he refers them to the Divine Righteouſneſs and Wiſdom. He makes no bargain with God, only thoſe Duties which can only be done upon Condition of God's beſtowing his requeſted Favours, may be promiſed and profeſſed by him conditionally. As for example, to thank and praiſe God particularly for any Favour conferred; which cannot be, if it be never received.

SECT. VI.

IV. A Fourth Ingredient in Prayer is Thankſgiving, that is, an actual loving of God for his Benefits already received. And this contributes to the ſtrengthning and invigorating of our Prayers and Deſires too. It is (as the reſt before) a neceſſary Sign, according to the degree of its vigour and frequency, of the ſame degree of Goodneſs in us. For if we love God for his Benefits, we ſhall naturally deſire to pleaſe him, and to ſeek to know what doth ſo: and that, we cannot be ignorant, is by doing his Will, or by keeping his Commands with Care, to be univerſally holy, good and righteous in the grand Inſtance of univerſal Benevolence, and conſequently Self-denial, and all the Branches thereof. I ſay according to the

the degree of its Vigour and Frequency. For it's no wonder to ſee one who loves God for his Benefits, but ſeldom, now and then only, for one Fit, in a Prayer, never thinking of it afterwards; or in mean and low degree; one who loves God leſs and leſs often than many other Objects: I ſay, it is no wonder to ſee ſuch a Perſon to ſin and offend as often as theſe Objects are his Temptations: But if we loved God vigorouſly, and more than any other Objects, and ſo frequently that it became an habitual Temper of our Souls, it would moſt certainly produce in us the Effect of univerſal Holineſs. And ſo far forth as we find it in intenſneſs and conſtancy in our ſelves, ſo far is it a ſign thereof, and gives us reaſon conſequently to think our ſelves acceptable to God, and that it may be the more reaſonable and juſt for him to beſtow the good things we ask.

I do not think that Love to God for his Benefits conferred upon ones ſelf, or Thankfulneſs is a principal Virtue, but an excellent inſtrumental one it is: It is not an Inſtance of formal Goodneſs or Virtue, but it is a very frequent means thereof, and therefore a ſign. But to love God for himſelf as a part, or rather infinitely, the moſt conſiderable thing in the whole Univerſe, and therefore above all things, and with reference to the whole; this is indeed the nobleſt Inſtance of our Holineſs.

lineſs. The free and generous Acknowledg-
ment and Reſentment of God our Benefa-
ctor, of the Divine Favours already recei-
ved, is one good Uſe, Effect or Improvement
of them, which hath a further one ſtill,
(viz.) it cauſeth us to pleaſe God by keeping
his Commands, and becoming univerſally
holy and good, as I have before inſtanced;
and being a very probable ſign of this, it
gives us a juſt Faith and Confidence, and
heightens our Prayers and Deſires from God.
Ingratitude, that is, a Neglect or Contempt
of God's Favours already beſtowed, we
may be ſure can give us no Encouragement;
but it is a ſign of a dull, ſenſual, ſelfiſh
or wicked Mind, and ſo at leaſt of defect of
Goodneſs.

Again, actual Love to God for Favours
received, impreſſeth upon our Minds the
Memory of his paſt Goodneſs, and conſe-
quently gives us reaſon to argue he may be
good to us again [ſuppoſing we ſee no Cir-
cumſtances to alter the Caſe] in thoſe things
we now ask: And the more ſtill, if the Fa-
vours we have already received be of the
ſame kind with thoſe we do now deſire. If it
were before, it may be now [for ought we
ſee] juſt and reaſonable for God to hear us.
And this emboldens, animates and enlivens
our Petition or Deſire ſtill more.

There are beſides theſe more proper, other
colla-

collateral good Effects of Thankſgiving to God. It is a very pleaſant thing. For what more ſo than Love? what more delicious and ſweet? And what Friend is capable of being loved more than God? Where's ſuch a Friend and Benefactor as he from whom we have all? Again, the Reflection upon our own Security, upon our own Aſſurance of good things for the future, from the Experience of and Attention to the Divine Benignity and Goodneſs, is a very pleaſing and ſatisfactory thing, that we are in the Hands of Infinite Goodneſs; all which our Thankſgiving gives occaſion for. And this we are moſt ſenſible of, when under any Frights or Fears of ſome great Evils juſt ready to fall upon us: then we greedily call to mind God's paſt Goodneſs.

But here we muſt have a care of loving God *ultimately and only* for being particularly good to us, without at leaſt ſome habitual reference of it to the uſe of pleaſing him by doing the moſt Good we can; as a Man might love a good Maſter or any Perſon or Thing that is uſeful to himſelf, not much caring whether he be ſo to any body elſe: all which indeed is no better than *ſelfiſhneſs*: But we muſt look upon God's Goodneſs to us as one particular Inſtance of that *Univerſal Goodneſs* to all for which we love him, and whereby we are engaged to love and pleaſe

him,

him, and consequently to do good to all
himself doth, and to be perfect and happy
so being and doing: all which together is
be our *last End.* We are indeed for the mo
part more sensible of those his personal F
vours, because ordinarily we cannot so w
apprehend others Satisfaction and Pleas
as our own: But we ought equally to tha
God for his Benefits to others and our selv
if we could alike apprehend them.

And here we may do well sometimes
to aggravate God's Goodness, that is, to ta
notice of those Circumstances which
signs of the greatness thereof. As, tha
is the most free and undeserved. For wh
Addition of Good can we make to him?
what can we give him that is not his ow
or what Law or Power superiour to Hims
(to his own Nature) obligeth and controlle
him? We may also remember our selves th
God is good to us when we are bad, wh
we are negligent and take no notice there
ungrateful, undutiful, nay make ill use
his Favours, abuse them; [for this God m
do for some reasons, though we have
advantage of probability to expect it] whi
is a sign of more pure, free and sincere Goo
ness or Love to others. For we think no Pe
son can expect any Recompence for his Goo
ness from one he knows is unable, much le
from one he knows unwilling and loves hi
no

not. All this is to be done, that we may be more deeply affected with the Divine Goodneſs for the Ends aforeſaid. We may read *Jacob*'s Prayer to be delivered from his Brother *Eſau* as an Inſtance, *Gen.* 32. *Verſe* 9, 10, 11. In the 10th *Verſe*, before his Prayer, he takes notice of God's manifold Mercies to him without doubt with Thanks, and particularly of his Wealth and Increaſe that God had bleſſed him withal. *I am not worthy of the leaſt of all thy Mercies, and of all the Truth, which thou haſt ſhewed to thy ſervant; for with my Staff I paſſed over this Jordan, and now I am become two Bands.* In the *Pſalms* we meet often with Thankſgivings and Petitions, Praiſes and Prayers joyned together. *Pſalm* 144, in the two firſt *Verſes*, *David* bleſſeth and thanketh God: *Bleſſed be the Lord my ſtrength, who teacheth my Hands to war*, &c. *who ſubdueth the People under me.* And then *Verſe* the 5th, he petitions and prays for the long continuance of the like Goodneſs in God: and *Verſe* 7. *Send thine Hand from above, rid me, and deliver me out of great Waters, from the Hands of ſtrange Children.* And *Pſalm* 3. *Verſe* 3, 4, 7. And *Pſalm* 9. to *Verſe* 13. is moſt Acknowledgments and Praiſes, and then a Prayer; *Have Mercy upon me, O Lord; conſider my Troubles which I ſuffer of them that hate me, thou that lifteſt me up from the Gates of Death.* And *Pſalm* 13, after his Petition in the 6th *Verſe*,

Verſe, he ſaith he will ſing unto the Lord because he hath dealt bountifully with him.

SECT. VII.

V. A Fifth Ingredient in a Prayer, is ſome times particular explication of our Caſe, either of the one or more good things we deſire to have, or of the Evil things we deſire to be delivered from; a more diſtinct Repreſentation and View of them directed to God. And this then eſpecially when we intend to make a more particular expreſs Addreſs to God in ſecret or in publick, alone or with others, for one or for ſome few certain things.

It may be done ſometimes [as when we find our ſelves very ſenſible and clearly apprehenſive of, and affected with the goodneſs of any thing] in our Prayers for ordinary and general good things. Here alſo may come in the reaſons or grounds of our great Deſires at this time, ſuch as now the great Goodneſs of the things, their Neceſſity, Difficulty, if not Impoſſibility by any ſecond Cauſes we yet ſee, or the like.

Now the uſe of this is not to acquaint God more particularly with our Caſe, or to move him to be the more favourable to us, or pity us, by giving him a diſtinct Knowledge of what we need or deſire: not ſo much as the

moſt

most general Prayer and Desire is needful for that such as the Poets was approved by *Socrates*, and extant in *Brodæus*'s Collection of *Greek* Epigrams: *viz. That* Jupiter *would give him good things whether he asked them or no, and keep evil things from him though he should pray for them*: And another of his mentioned by *Xenophon*, viz. *That the Gods would give him good things*, leaving it to them, as best knowing what were such, to choose for him: No, but one principal reason is, to cause our selves longer to attend to our Wants, we doing it more particularly and distinctly, and consequently to be more affected with them, and so more passionately, earnestly and importunately to desire the supply of them. A very confused general short transient Apprehension of the Goodness or Badness of things, doth not generally so deeply affect us, or raise up such strong Passions in us, as a more particular, distinct and longer one, by frequent smart Bouts (yet not so continuedly long as to tyre us) doth.

Plat. *Alcib.* 2. Brod. *Epig. lib.* 1. Xenoph. *Memorab. lib.* 1. Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ καὶ εὐχομένοις καὶ ἀνεύκτοις —— Ἀμμι δίδου, τὰ δὲ λυγρὰ καὶ εὐχομένων ἀπερεύκοις. Ἠύχετο Σωκράτης πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς ἁπλῶς τἀγαθὰ διδόναι ὡς τοὺς θεοὺς κάλλιστα οἰδότας, ὁποῖα ἀγαθά ἐστιν.

For the same cause may the grounds or reasons of the Greatness of our Desires be mentioned, such as the great Consequence of the things, nay their Necessity; which is

is nothing but so great a Goodness of the things as we cannot be content to want, nor help it, but that the want thereof will afflict and pain us. Here sometimes the many good effects of the granting our desires may be more particularly reckoned up and insisted on: as also the many difficulties and improbabilities of our desires being effected by any second causes we see. For these more distinctly and longer attended to, do make our Prayers directed to God immediately for his Care and Influence more strong and fervent. Things judged of little moment, will hardly draw any, or but a slight Prayer from us. Things that we see in the Power of second Causes, which we can command to effect, we judge them in a manner done and effected already; we see the thing future in the Cause, and therefore rather to be praised than prayed for: Things also that are easie to be done by second Causes, have a great probability of their being done and accomplished without our Prayer, and therefore much slackens or cools our Desires.

But here we must provide that all these grounds be true; that the things we judge of such particular good Consequence and Effect really be so; that there is really so much Improbability, Difficulty or Impossibility to us in the obtaining our Desires any other way than by God's special Influence; as we say there-

there is: of which ſomewhat hereafter. The Example of this we have in *Hezekiah*'s Prayer before cited: 2 *Kings*, 19. *Ver.* 17. *Of a truth, Lord* (ſaith he) *the Kings of Aſſyria have deſtroyed the Nations and the Lands, and have caſt their gods into the Fire*, &c. This ſeems to intimate ſome Danger, that they might do ſo to him and his People too; ſome Probability of it, ſome Difficulty to prevent it: But yet he gives himſelf a reaſon why the Lord their God could prevent it, though thoſe other Nation's gods could not: though there was Difficulty or Danger as to ſecond Cauſes; yet none as to the Lord *Jehovah* their God; and therefore he prayed to him to ſave him out of *Sennacherib*'s Hands, *Verſe* 19. with this reaſon, *That all the Kingdoms of the Earth may know, that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.* This reaſon is an Inſtance of the Goodneſs of the thing he deſires; it is one good Effect and Conſequence of his Deliverance by the Lord, which therefore made him more bold and earneſtly to deſire it, *(viz.)* the Knowledge and Honour of him the only true God in the World, and eſpecially in their neighbouring Idolatrous Nations.

In the *Pſalms* [moſt of which have ſome Prayer or other in them] it is very frequent. The 88. *Pſalm*, moſt of it is of this Nature. From the 3d *Verſe* to the 9th, is *David*'s recital

cital to God of his Caſe, moſt in general Terms; only one *Verſe* is more particular. *Verſe* 3. *My Soul is full of Troubles, and my Life draweth nigh unto the Grave; I am counted with them that go down into the Pit: I am as a Man that hath no Strength.* That is, his Anxiety and Grief was ſo great, ſo heavy, that it was near killing and oppreſſing him quite. And *Verſe* 7. *Thy Wrath lyeth hard upon me, and thou haſt afflicted me with all thy Waves.* That is, with many and many ſorts of Afflictions. And in the 8th *Verſe* more particularly: *Thou haſt put away my acquaintance far from me*, &c. One Evil he complain'd of was, that his Friends were falſe, unconſtant, turned his Enemies; either they dared not, or could not help him. As in the 18. *Verſe* again, His Acquaintance were in Darkneſs *(viz.)* in Priſon or Affliction, or they were gone he knew not where. And then in the 13. and 14. *Verſes.* He prays to God for his Favour to help and reſcue him. From the 15. *Verſe* again to the end he proceeds in his rehearſal of his pitiful Condition. In the 10, 11, 12, *Ver.* too he mentions the Neceſſity, and one good Conſequence of his Deliverance from theſe great Preſſures. *Wilt thou ſhew Wonders to the Dead*, &c. *And ſhall thy Loving-kindneſs be declared in the Grave, or thy Faithfulneſs in Deſtruction? ſhall thy Wonders be known in the dark, and thy Righteouſ-*

Righteouſneſs in the Land of Forgetfulneſs? The ſenſe of this is, That he ſhould ſoon die, if God did not help him, and put him into a better Condition. That theſe kinds or inſtances of Favours, *(viz.)* Deliverance from ſuch his Enemies; and the like could not be ſhewn but in this Life; not after Death. And then again, one good Effect of God's Pleaſure to deliver him here, would be great Thanks to him, and Praiſes and honouring of him, by his publiſhing and proclaiming this his eſpecial Goodneſs, and that in particular of his Faithfulneſs, which would not be in the State after Death: or at leaſt his Death and Deſtruction by ſuch means would be no ſuch Argument of his Goodneſs to him, as his Life and Preſervation would be.

The like we have again in the 79. *Pſalm*, which is a publick Prayer, and moſt probably was written after the Captivity of *Babylon*. And the Title *Pſalm* of *Aſaph*, may ſignifie that it was compoſed either by ſome *Aſaph* about that time, or elſe by ſome other devout Perſon in Imitation of *Aſaph*. From the firſt to the fourth *Verſe* is a Declaration of the miſerable State of the *Jews*. *O God, the Heathen are come into thine Inheritance, thy holy People have they defiled; they have laid Jeruſalem upon Heaps.* And then *Verſe* 5. *How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever?*

That is, we earneſtly beſeech thee, that thou wouldſt not, *&c.* and ſo on in *Verſe* 6. the reſt is a mixture of thoſe two, *(viz.)* Declaration or Propoſal of their Condition, and Petition. Only in *Verſe* 10, and 13, are mentioned good Conſequences of the granting their humble Deſires as Reaſons of their Hopes and Prayers, *(viz.)* the Prevention of the diſhonouring the God of *Iſrael* among the idolatrous Heathen. *Wherefore ſhould the Heathen ſay, where is now their God?* And then their Love, Praiſe and Thankfulneſs to him for his Deliverance. *So we thy People and Sheep of thy Paſture will give thee Thanks for ever*, &c. Theſe are but for Inſtances, we may obſerve the like in moſt *Pſalms*.

SECT. VIII.

VI. THe Sixth and laſt Ingredient in a Prayer, is *Petition*, an expreſs Deſire that God would beſtow upon us ſome thing. This I make the very eſſence of Prayer, without which no Prayer. A Prayer may be without the reſt of the ingredients, but no Prayer could be without this; It would be called by another Name; they are all principally for the ſake of this, as I have in every Particular ſhew'd. They are but Helps to make this more fervent or more comprehenſive,

prehenſive, particular and diſtinct, or more continued and laſting, *&c.*

Now there are two things generally herein to be conſidered and regarded, the *Senſe* and the *Paſſion*, together with ſome conſequent Diſpoſition impreſſed upon the will, which is the effect of all paſſions: the Things prayed for or deſired, and the Deſire it ſelf. And ſo in all the other parts of Prayer. In Acknowledgment are the divine Perfections acknowledged, and the Affections of Admiration, Honour, Reverence, Fear, Love, Joy, *&c.* In Confeſſion the ſins acknowledged, and Grief, Sorrow, Hatred, Contempt of them and for them: In Profeſſion the ſenſe of what we profeſs, and the Paſſion and Diſpoſition of Devotion, Reſolution or obediential Inclination. In Thankſgiving, the Things thanked for and Love for them or Gratitude: Nay, in the Recital and Explication of our Caſes, the Senſe recited, and our Paſſion of Fear, Grief, Deſire. The Senſe or Things deſired, and the Paſſion of Deſire and its degrees, are variouſly expreſſed and ſignified in the ſame Sentence. The general thing expreſly or ſuppoſedly deſired, is, That God would grant us the thing we deſire (An account of the particular things to be deſired will be another general Head) by many words in the Scripture expreſſed both proper and figurative; as *give*, *grant*, *hearken*,

ſee, behold, look down, regard, turn not away, hide not thy Face, remember, forget us not, &c. many more ſuch figurative expreſſions eſpecially may be met withal; becauſe when Men will and are inclin'd to grant any thing to a Petitioner, there are theſe bodily Motions or mental Actions which accompany it, or have ſome Relation to it: All which in God ſignifie nothing but to will the thing deſired, and to effect it; that he would command or will ſuch a thing to be done. The Paſſion of Deſire is ſometimes expreſſed in Sentences with Interrogations, or the like Schemes of Speech.

In the *Pſalms* which are very Rhetorical (one part of which is to have Paſſions and great ones well expreſſed and ſignified) nothing more frequent: As *Pſalm* 88. *Verſe* 14. *Why caſteſt thou off my Soul? why hideſt thou thy Face from me?* That is, *I earneſtly beſeech thee* not to withhold thy Favour from me. *And wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Will thou draw out thine Anger to all Generations?* That is, *we importunately deſire of thee* that thou wouldſt be pleaſed to ceaſe to puniſh us. And ſo ſometimes Multitude of Words *more* ſignifie ſome degree of Paſſion than any different ſenſe. Nay very often the multitude of *ſingle Words* do not ſignifie *any* different Senſes or Idea's, but *only* ſome degree of Paſſion. For the uſe of many words to expreſs one

one thing commonly proceeds from the minds being longer detained in the thought of it by ſome paſſion. As when I call a thing *noble*, *excellent*, *incomparable*, all theſe Words together generally expreſs or are a ſign of not ſo many different ſenſes; but only of a degree of Affection; nay very often ſome certain ſingle words or phraſes ſignifie not the Idea's or Conceptions of things only: but withal a degree of ſome Affection or Paſſion; as of Admiration, Love, Deſire, as in the words juſt now mentioned. So the word *wretched Sinner* to ſome Perſons ſignifies not only the ſenſe or conception of *a mans being a great ſinner*: but withal a greater degree of Hatred or Contempt or Indignation, than the word *great Sinner*. But of this more, and more particularly where we give ſome Directions concerning the Signs of our Senſe and Paſſions, ſuch as are Speech and Geſture.

From what hath been diſcourſed concerning the Ingredients of a Prayer, we may obſerve, that it thus perform'd contains all the parts of divine Worſhip. For there can be no other or more than to have God the Object of the Operations of our Souls, which is internal Worſhip, and to ſignifie this by ſome ſenſible ſigns of certain Motions either of ſome part or of the whole of our Body, which is external Worſhip. And more particularly to have him the Object of our Underſtanding,

Will, Affections: and more particularly yet, to think of and contemplate as distinctly as we can his Nature and Actions, his Attributes and the infinite variety of the effects thereof, generally comprehended under the three heads of Creation, Preservation, Providence: To honour, reverence and admire God for those his infinite Perfections, to love him for them and for the particular Effects thereof to our selves and to all his Creatures, to desire to please him, to desire him, that is, to desire to enjoy him by Contemplation and Love, and to desire from him all things, to rejoyce and delight our selves in him, *i.e.* in the enjoyment of himself and Possession of his Favour, to put our Trust and Confidence in him, to devote our selves to obey him, nay universally to will as he wills, both what ought to be done, or the Matter of his Commands, and what shall come to pass in the World, or the Matter of his Decrees or Appointments: The former of which may be called active Obedience; the latter passive, *&c.* I say these things, and such like when signified and expressed by any sensible signs of the Motions of some part or the whole of our Bodies, as Words and external Actions, contain the whole of *Worship*; and to do all these in such manner as the Infinity of each of the divine Perfections respectively requires is *divine Worship*.

That

That is among other things for inſtance ſake only, to do them univerſally in all things, perpetually, habitually, with the utmoſt vigour and ſtrength of our Souls; to God ultimately; with the greateſt Company or Number that can conveniently do it in one place; at the ſame time with all others in different places; and finally to him alone, as a ſign of his unity, or of his being God alone, which is one attribute of his nature: to diſcourſe all which particularly belongs to another Argument.

CHAP. II.

The Second general Head is the ſeveral ſorts of Prayer.

THE Diviſions of Prayer may be numerous, as many *(viz.)* as there are Logical Relations. Many of the ordinary ones are of no great uſe; ſome of them may be theſe.

SECT.

SECT. I.

1. ONe Diſtinction is into Mental and Vocal, from one ſort of Adjuncts: Mental, is that which is conceived in the Mind only: Vocal, that which is expreſſed by Words. This Diſtinction, if of any concern or uſe to be mentioned, ſhould have been in a Prayer not ſignified to others, or ſignified both by Words and other external Signs or bodily Action or Motion.

SECT. II.

II. THey diſtinguiſh it into ejaculatory and ſet Prayers, or into occaſional and fixed or deſigned. The one is when any thing occurring to a Man's Thoughts, and appearing on a ſudden very good or bad, excites ſome ſmart Paſſion in him, and cauſeth him to dart up a Deſire to God to give it him or keep it from him. As when one obſerves an approaching Temptation, and perceives himſelf in danger to be overcome, his inordinate Appetite or ſome Paſſion beginning to ſtir, and to grow boiſterous, he ſmartly breaths out a warm Deſire for the divine Aſſiſtance and Help, oft-times utterly unobſerved by any, though perhaps in the midſt of Company. So when a perſon in his ſet Reflec-

Reflection or occaſional thoughts takes notice of and clearly apprehends the Iniquity, the Unreaſonableneſs, the Folly, the Miſchievouſneſs either of Sin in general, or of any particular inordinate and immoderate Appetite, or Luſt; or on the other hand the profitableneſs, and conſequently the reaſonableneſs and wiſdom (if there be any difference in the World in our Actions, and all things be not alike eligible) of Virtue in general, or of any particular one, as of Charity, Self-denyal, Humility, Spirituality; I ſay when one clearly apprehends theſe things, his Soul may of a ſudden ſwell and burſt with a mighty Deſire that the Almighty, and All-good God would purge, reſcue and preſerve it from ſuch baſe and deteſtable things as his Luſts; or that he would ingenerate, increaſe and confirm in him that noble, excellent moſt perfect Temper of Virtue. And ſo likewiſe there may be Ejaculations or ſudden dartings out of other Affections and Paſſions beſides Deſire, and therefore in all the other Parts of Prayer, as in Acknowledgment of the Divine Attributes, upon a clear Sight and Apprehenſion of any of them in ſome Inſtance, or upon any occaſion according to the Nature of the Attributes apprehended, mighty Admiration, Honour, Reverence, Love, Joy, Faith or Truſt, *&c.* may on a ſudden break forth. In Reflection upon

and

and Confeſſion of ones Faults, a keen and ſudden fit of Hatred of them, Shame and Sorrow for them may be excited, and ſo in the reſt. When Men are on a ſudden ſurprized or frighted with any great Evil, how naturally do they ſhoot up a ſwift and ſtrong Deſire for God's Protection or Deliverance, *a Lord have Mercy on them*; though they never otherwiſe prayed. A deſigned Prayer is when one doth ſum up his Petitions forethinking them (and ſo of the other Ingredients of Prayer) with intent to propoſe and direct them to God.

This may be ordinary at ſome conſtant ſet times, and moſt-what of general things with occaſional Additions, as once or oftner a ſome ſet part of the day: Or extraordinary when a Man ſets ſome one time on purpoſe apart for it, when a Man expreſly propoſeth to entertain himſelf with ſuch Thoughts and Affections according as he may have Opportunity and Ability. Ejaculatory Prayers are uſually very fervent, becauſe the Good or Evil of the things ſo occaſionally deſired is very clearly and ſtrongly apprehended, and then the Soul for ſuch a ſhort time can better intend its Strength and Vigour; and finally all Paſſions Mental or Corporeal (eſpecially theſe laſt) in a little time fail and grow weak. But here we are to have a care too, as much as we can, to proportion the Strength of our

our Deſires to the Goodneſs of things, and to get an habitual Judgment thereof.

Theſe kind of Prayers thus directed, and therefore eſpecially in ſpiritual things, if frequent, are of excellent uſe well to diſpoſe, ſecure and guard a Man's Mind, and to obtain all other the good Effects and Benefits of Prayer hereafter to be mentioned.

SECT. III.

III. A Prayer is uſually diſtinguiſhed by one Adjunct of the Matter or Contents of which it is compoſed, *viz.* that it is the *ſame or diverſe*.

A Prayer may be the very ſame with another (that is like to it) in Senſe, Paſſion, Speech or Words, and other external Signs and their Circumſtances, as Order: or it may be diverſe therefrom. A Prayer may be the ſame, only in Senſe, but not in Speech or other external Signs, they may change; and it is ordinary to expreſs the ſame Things and Paſſions too by diverſe Words or other Signs. Sometimes on the contrary, a Prayer may be the ſame in Speech and Words and other Signs, and not the ſame exactly in Senſe and Paſſions. Nay I think it hardly ever is, and that no two Men who uſe the ſame Words and external Signs, have exactly

actly the same Idea's and Sense, and the same Passions and Dispositions neither as to Nature or Degree. Nay it seems more probable that even the same Person using at two several times the same Speech or other external Signs, hath very rarely, if ever accurately the same Sense and Passions signified. But let it be enough just to have mentioned such a minute Speculation, and yet not useless in its Place, but of greater consequence in disputes and controversies than all are aware of. When a Prayer is the same with another both in Sense and Words, it is called a *Form of Prayer*, which may be more or less called so as it is more or less often repeated, and hath more or less of the same Sense and Words, so that there are Degrees. And so it is in premeditated and extemporary Prayer, which may be more or less diverse from all other Prayers.

This Form may be composed by ones self who recites it, or by another. And according to this Sense of the Word, a Prayer that is recited by one but once, whether composed by himself or others, is not a Form, but if more than once, or often, it is. Where also it may be observed, that hardly any Man's Prayer but is more or less a Form, that is, it hath more or less of some Prayer which hath been before said or recited by some person or other, at least by himself, whether it

was

was of his own or another's Invention. I ſay it is a Form more or leſs, and that not only in ſenſe, but in Words and in the Order too.

The greateſt Difference even in the Prayers of thoſe who are of moſt copious and various Conceit and Invention, is uſually in Words and Expreſſions, and Order of Things, which ſometimes may be one way, ſometimes another, and yet the Coherence not very remote, but very good by reaſon of diverſe Relations of things one to another. As one one and the ſame thing may come in, in a Prayer, after one thing as its Cauſe, and ſo as a Means; after another, as its Effect, and ſo as a Motive; after another as one of its Kinds or Inſtances, *&c.* and if the Prayer be premeditated by a Perſon uſed to reaſoning, this Variety is more eaſie, but if it be *extempore* (ſuppoſing his Prayer be one continued thing without Interruption) his ſight of the Relation of things and his Reaſoning muſt be very quick, or elſe oft-times the Order and Coherence will be very impertinent, and unaccountable. Though the Truth is, that it is a thing of leſs Concernment, ſo the Matter be but true and profitable; and oft-times great and juſt paſſions cauſe a Man utterly to neglect Method. To affect Variety in Prayers as every where elſe, meerly for it ſelf, is a light and childiſh thing, and the being pleaſed

fed therewith is at leaſt an Effect of Impru-
dence, and ſo much unſeaſonable, as if not
to be wholly excluded, yet to be ſparingly
admitted; becauſe otherwiſe it will uſually
take off Mens Minds from thoſe things which
are of greater Concernment, and to which
they are to attend in their Prayer in the
firſt place; that is, the Truth and Goodneſs
of things ſpoken, plainly conveyed and ex-
preſſed. Truth and Goodneſs of things are
called ſubſtantial things; that is, of every
way greater Uſe, Benefit, or Profit; than
Multitude, Variety, Unwontedneſs, Nove-
ty, and all Elegancy of Senſe and Words
Things and Expreſſions. And we deſerved
blame and undervalue this Childiſhneſs or
want of Judgment of the Excellency, Uſe-
fulneſs and Value of Things every where elſe
in all other Writings, in all our ordinary
Converſations and Employments. Things
moſt uſeful and true, are to be firſt and prin-
cipally minded, though never ſo common
and ordinary; and if it be neceſſary, Variety
of other things is chiefly to commend them,
and cauſe them more to be attended to, to
pleaſe, and to be applied to Uſe. Theſe ſub-
ſtantial things are like Bread in our Dyet,
or our daily Food; other Varieties are but a
little to repair our Appetites, and reſtore them
to that and ſuch like more wholſome Nouriſh-
ment.

If

If the Prayer be *diverſe* from any other; it is either each time premeditated, or left to *extempore* Invention, Judgment and Memory, and that natural or inſpired. A Prayer *diverſe* from another might be otherwiſe from other Reſpects diſtinguiſhed: but becauſe theſe things are moſt talked of, and very uſeful things concerning them may indeed be obſerved, I ſhall take notice only of this Diſtinction, and further obſerve ſome things (not intending accurately to diſcuſs the ſo fiercely agitated a Controverſie which is beſt) concerning each of them.

Some therefore of the Advantages of Forms of Prayers of all ſorts in ſome degree or other, are,

Firſt, For the moſt part the Truth of what is prayed, as alſo a more extended great and conſtant Goodneſs of the Things according as they have been allowed, or not excepted againſt, and remain ſo: for there hath been more Time and more Perſons for the Conſideration and Examination of their Truth and Goodneſs, than in premeditated or *extempore* Prayers, and this ſtill the more they are Forms; that is, the more there are the ſame Things and Words in them, and the oftner they have been repeated, and eſpecially by a greater Variety of Perſons. For more Perſons have had longer Time to attend to, to take notice, examine and conſider the

Truth and Juſtice of the things contained; and to remark what is unlawful, dubious, falſe, of little or of no good effect, or hurtful and miſchievous. And therefore it is moſt likely they have *actually* examined or taken notice of them; and if they have done ſo, it is more likely they would have diſcovered ſuch things if they had been there. This, I ſay, is a very probable ſign of the Juſtice and Truth of the Things therein contained, and which is wanting in premeditated or *extempore* Prayers: I do not ſay it is a neceſſary one; for many things dubious, uncertain and not right, may eſcape the Notice or the Correction of many Ages. In a Prayer of a Man's own Compoſition, the oftner he hath uſed it, the more probable ſign it is hereof.

And here therefore publick Prayers have the advantage generally, ſo far as they are not excepted againſt; and where they are, yet it is not to be doubted, that if moſt Men's Prayers of their own Compoſition premeditated, but eſpecially *extempore*, were expoſed as long to publick Cenſure and Examination, there would be more juſtly found in them more Defects and Faults, and ſome ſhameful enough. And ſometimes ſo many and ſo very bad, that their Prayers would be worſe than none, or but little better. The Things and Senſe being uncertain, falſe, trivial,

vial, unlawful, ill expreſſed; of which more preſently. Nevertheleſs it is to be acknowledged, that as *extempore*, premeditated or private Forms of Prayer are more obnoxious to the Falſhood, Frivolouſneſs, Injuſtice, Diſorder of more of what is contained therein, and to many other Defects, than publick Forms: So publick Forms not only of Prayers but of all other things will have thoſe they have longer continued.

For firſt, ſometimes their Authority makes them leſs ſuſpected and examined; and then when any Defects are ſuſpected or known, they are not ſo readily declared out of Fear or a juſt Modeſty; and when they are declared, they are more prejudicedly and partially defended, and that generally by Perſons of the choiceſt Wit, and greateſt Ability; and when they are acknowledged by the generality of the Society and of the Governors themſelves, it is difficult to have them altered, becauſe of the Number and Variety of Perſons both Governors and Governed, who are concerned to agree. And the Inconvenience or ill Effects of Alteration is a greater Evil oft-times than the Continuance of many Defects. For it is firſt difficult to get all the concerned Perſons together; and amongſt ſo many Perſons many things are objected and debated, which takes up Time and Pains, eſpecially if ſome being (as there always are)

paſſionate and prejudiced, do not only calmly propoſe, but contend and contrive that their Opinion may be retained or received. Sometimes it is difficult to cauſe a new Conſtitution to be known, or practiſed by the governed; and many other inconveniencies may there be. We ſee by experience, how hard a thing it is to have any Defect, though plain enough, altered in publick Opinions and Practices conſtituted. Wherefore the Conſtituters of publick Forms of Prayer, and ſo of Opinions and other things, have the more need of being wiſer and uprighter than the Authors of private ones, which notwithſtanding is not always ſo: But ſometimes they may be compoſed and conſtituted in an ignorant, hypocritical, prophane, cunningly Tyrannical, or Senſual age. There are many Prayers conſtituted or allowed of by that no leſs boaſting than corrupt Church of *Rome*, which in reſpect of their Falſhood or Uncertainty, their Trivialneſs and Uſeleſsneſs, their Impertinency, Diſorder and Confuſion, a Man of ordinary Examination and Underſtanding would diſdain to uſe himſelf, or appoint for the uſe of the meaneſt and moſt ignorant. And I think I could inſtance in ſome as contemptible as any fanatical Mechanick among us hath blundered out *extempore*.

2. Another advantage of a Form of Prayer conſequent upon the firſt, is, that a Man may

may more joyn in his affections with all that is prayed, and eſpecially if it be a Form to him, that is, he hath often heard it repeated. For he being more reaſonably ſatisfied, partly by Teſtimony, partly poſſibly by his own Examination of the Truth and Righteouſneſs of the things in the Prayer, hath nothing to do but to ſend up the Deſires of his Soul, or to raiſe up other ſutable Paſſions and Affections in himſelf; whereas a Man being more reaſonably obliged to examine other Prayers, and to know both theſe before he be affected with them, his Time will be taken up therein, and little or none left for Affections. Nay, he may be ſo long in attending to the Truth or Juſtice of one thing ſpoken, that he may neglect the greateſt part of the reſt. Beſides that Examination and Attention to and Judgment concerning the Truth of Things, naturally indiſpoſeth for all Paſſions, but moſt eſpecially juſt at the time thereof. The reaſon why this Diſadvantage of premeditated or *extempore* Prayers of ſingle Perſons hath not by moſt of the Deſpiſers of Forms been taken notice of, is becauſe they have taken all for true and good which Perſons have ſaid, and never examined, or they have formerly and perhaps often heard the ſame things from them and others in Prayers; and ſo far theſe very premeditated or *extempore* Prayers are indeed a Form to theſe hearers.

3. Another Advantage of Forms where the ſame Words are uſed is, That in them the Senſe is better conveyed, the Meaning of Expreſſions is better underſtood. Men, eſpecially the vulgar, by often hearing and attending to Words and Expreſſions, uſually know better what they mean, than thoſe which are new and not before heard.

4. Another Advantage of Forms is, that they are very uſeful for the Memory: being often repeated, they are more impreſſed upon the Memory, and ſo if they contain any good uſeful thing, are always the more ready for Uſe, come oftner to the Mind, and thereby do ſome general good. They can alſo be better quoted and cited by one to another upon Occaſion of Advice or Reproof; when one asks another whether he be, and adviſes that he would, or minds him that he is not ſo good as his Prayers. Beſides, it hath ſome more Authority; it is a Prayer which he himſelf hath liked, approved, joyned in; it is readier therefore for uſe; a Man needs not ſtand firſt to prove the Truth or Goodneſs of the Thing, but preſently apply it: Whereas in Prayers which are always diverſe, there is little by moſt remembred of them, and if they be forgotten, they can do no more good then what they did at the preſent when ſpoken: nor if they be remembred, can they be ſo preſently made uſe of, nor have they

they ſo much Authority, as Forms. On the other hand, the Advantages of a premeditated Prayer may be,

Friſt, Increaſe of Knowledge, there being uſually more Variety of Things, and Things more particular and diſtinct. This is an Effect of premeditated or *extempore Prayers*, not of *a Prayer*: Of *many* diverſe Prayers oppoſed to a Form not of *one only*, for one Form may contain as much variety of things, as one premeditated or *extempore* Prayer; but many diverſe premeditated or *extempore* Prayers oppoſed to the ſame Form as many times repeated give Occaſion for a more various and diſtinct and particular Knowledge of of Things. It puts Men upon Invention and Conſideration of things, it prevents Illeneſs, and conſequently which moſt-what follows Ignorance, Dulneſs and Senſuality, it cauſeth Men more to imploy their Minds about the two moſt excellent Objects of them, Truth and Goodneſs. It ſeemeth therefore in this Reſpect of one very good Conſequence generally (for there is Exception) that the Clergy be at leaſt permitted to compoſe Prayers of their own as well as Sermons: but then it would be of better Effect ſtill if they had at leaſt ſometimes one or more Governors to be their Auditors to overlook them, and prudently to incourage them when they

did well, and direct them when they might do better. There may be both too little and too much Employment: they both are generally Causes of doing very slightly and ill what is done.

(2.) Consequently for Attention to what is contained in a Prayer, premeditated Prayers are a help thereto. For what we very well know, what we have often heard, we are apt to neglect: What is new whether Sense or Expression, we are apt to take more heed to, to mark and observe; and this because of all our natural Appetites to increase our Knowledge and the Perfection thereof. It is reasonable we should gratifie this Appetite; but then we must have a care that we do not prefer it before a better: that is, that of the Profitableness or Excellency of the Objects of our Knowledge. We must not prefer the Novelty or Variety before the Utility of our Knowledge, and so it may be Trifles before very useful Things: We should order it so too, what we can, as to make them consistent one with another, and one subservient to the other. As that the Variety be of profitable and excellent things. But very often Variety and Utility of Conceit are naturally inconsistent, and the first is often a sign and sometimes a cause of the want of the second.

Men

Men of very various conceit are often defective in Judgment, or rather in the perception and ſight of the Truth and Uſefulneſs of things, of which the cauſe might eaſily be more particularly ſhewn, if it were here proper. Wherefore we ſhould be ſo far from a general Approbation and Admiration of Men meerly for Variety and Multitude of Conceit, that it ſhould rather (if we ſee no other reaſon to the contrary) diſpoſe us to undervalue them, as being a probable ſign of the Defect of a far better Quality than that is.

(3.) Another Advantage of premeditated Prayer, is the ſeaſonableneſs and pertinency of things in Prayer. For there may happen ſome Wants which could not be foreſeen at any diſtance, and therefore not provided for; or if they be, yet ſome may be more particularly and diſtinctly, and with more Variety of Phraſe or Speech, and other ſigns both of our ſenſe or meaning and of our affections (which may be of good uſe though always the ſame perſons ſhould be our Auditors, much more when there are many of different capacities) inſiſted upon at ſome Times and Places than at others.

The Goodneſs of ſuch things too thus ſeaſonable, pertinent and preſent, is more clearly apprehended, and conſequently prayed for with more ſtrong and vigorous Affections.

It

It may often happen to ſome perſons, that when their inventions are warmed with a ſerious and *affectionate* reciting their own premeditated Prayer, they may ſee in ſome things a greater excellency then before they had taken notice of: whence their paſſions on a ſudden may be more raiſed, and their expreſſions of them in words more various natural and proper than at another time. Sometimes alſo they may have ſome new things ſtart into their minds of great uſe and very pertinent. When this is, an *extempore* interpoſition may be ſeaſonable, and not to be excluded, eſpecially in private and ſecret Prayer.

(4.) Another Advantage *uſually* (not always) of diverſe premeditated Prayers is reality and fervency of affection by reaſon of the variety of the matter. Men generally are leſs affected with old and well known things than with new. The reaſon of which is the boundleſsneſs of mens deſires. There is no good ſo great, but we can conceive and conſequently deſire a greater ſtill, till we come to infinite. Whence it is that we take off deſires from what we already poſſeſs, and conſequently our love and eſteem, at leaſt for the preſent, and reſerve them for ſome other good ſtill, of which we are ignorant. We generally think it a mean thing

to ſit down content with leſs than what we are capable of enjoying. We are like the ambitious and covetous man who grows cold in his eſteem and love of the greateſt places of honor and profit which he hath long injoyed: he is ſtill purſuing and graſping at more and greater: either he would make an addition to what he already hath, or find out greater than they are. This reality and fervency of affection is truly a very great benefit, ſuppoſing the affections to be rightly and in due degree directed to things true and uſeful: but if that be not ſuppoſed, it may be as great a miſchief. For great inordinate and immoderate affections miſerably corrupt the judgments and inclinations; they render them erroneous and ſuperſtitious: and I think one of the principal cauſes why of late diverſe premeditated, nay *extempore* Prayers have been preferred before Forms, whether publick or private is an immoderate love to great and buſling affections for any thing though never ſo unworthy of them, to which we may add great variety, and quickneſs of conceit and invention, as in *extempore* Prayers.

The Advantage of *Variety* and *Copiouſneſs* of Conceit is both in premeditated and *extempore* Prayers: and is becauſe there are *many* of them uſed in Oppoſition to but *one* as often a repeated Form, as is before ſaid. But

quick-

quickneſs of Conceit or Invention is only ſeen in *extempore* Prayers: where if the thing invented be but indifferently good, there is hardly any Quality of our Minds that is ſo much eſteemed and applauded by the generality of Men. Of which one reaſon is, and it may be the principal, becauſe it is judged a ſign of an extraordinary Ability in the Perſon to invent and apprehend moſt excellent things eaſily and clearly, if he did premeditate. He that can do ſo much *extempore* (think they) what would he do if he were allowed Time? which is very oft a great miſtake.

There is another reaſon alſo very general, and that is, That Men are much pleaſed with Diſpatch or Performance of any uſeful thing in a ſhort time. And in truth he that can perform the ſame thing in half the time which another can do it, is in that particular twice as valuable.

Theſe things in Prayers although they naturally do and may much pleaſe the mind of Man; yet they may do it too much in compare with others which are better, *viz.* the Truth and Uſefulneſs of what is ſaid. A Fault that is very often committed in Sermons and Books, and other Performances, by thoſe Perſons who obſerve and complain of it in Prayers. If we ſeparate things and compare them; without doubt it is better that one and the ſame excellent good thing ſhould be

appre-

apprehended and willed by us, though never ſo ſluggiſhly and dully, than that many and a great number either of unprofitable, trifling, uſeleſs, miſchievous and bad things ſhould be known by us, and fly about in our Imaginations, and be violently and vigorouſly with ſtrong Paſſions willed and purſued. The firſt indeed doth leſs good, but yet ſome; but this laſt doth a great deal of hurt. If we muſt loſe or part with one of theſe, it is better to loſe that of Variety and Celerity and Copiouſneſs of Conceit, and ſtrength of Paſſion, than that of the Certainty and Profitableneſs of the Objects of our Knowledge and Wills. It is better to have no Paſſions at all, and conſequently in this ſtate generally but languid and weak Inclinations, than to have them directed to wrong Objects, or to right ones in an exceſſive degree. And yet men generally are incomparably more pleaſed with Life and Activity, which is cauſed much and exerted in Variety and Celerity of Conceit, and Greatneſs of Paſſions, than with its right Determination and Goodneſs. And as Men are for the moſt part unduely pleaſed with premeditated and even *extempore* Prayers upon the account of Variety and quickneſs of Conceit, So there are others too who are pleaſed with publick or private Forms, or very well content with them, not ſo much upon the account of the truth

truth and usefulness of the things therein contained, or other common advantages to men thereby: as because of the slowness and dulness of their own conceit and passions. It is difficult to them and consequently painful (which all men naturally shun) to apprehend any new thing to examine the truth and goodness thereof, and to excite their heavy and sluggish affections thereto: but they easily conceive and are affected with that which they have been accustomed to, that which they have very frequently heard and to which their affections have been used to be conjoyned: Contrariwise, those who are of quick conception and moveable affections, they apprehend new and various things with ease and delight, and are presently naturally affected with them. It is observable, that one of the most general causes of mens inclinations, choices and esteems of things is their own ability easily to obtain and possess them. Hence it may partly come to pass, that men advanced in years, and of staid and slow tempers, are usually pleased with Forms in any performance, but young and hot persons with Variety. So little most commonly doth reason or the foresight of the good or bad effects of things determine Mens Judgments concerning their general Worth and Value. And accordingly I believe it may be remembred, that lately those who were against all Forms

were

were generally of an active and paſſionate temper, but thoſe who were for ſome Forms at leaſt were of a more ſtaid and compoſed one.

Thoſe Prayers in which are Variety, Celerity, and great Affections, do more generally pleaſe Men, and are preferr'd before thoſe in which there is Truth and Uſefulneſs, for two reaſons among others.

Firſt, Becauſe Men are amiſs and depraved in their Inclinations, and love thoſe qualities better than theſe.

Secondly, Becauſe thoſe of variety, quickneſs and affectionateneſs are diſcerned more eaſily by every body in a Prayer; thoſe other of the Truth or Uſefulneſs not without more difficulty and but by very few; it is a difficult thing to examine and ſee them. The beſt is to make uſe of them all as there may be juſt reaſon.

Firſt, Be we ſure that the Objects of our Knowledge and Wills be true and good, and then let us furniſh our ſelves with as plentiful a knowledge of them, and have as ſtrong Affections to them, in compare with other things, as they deſerve.

Let us be ſure the Matter be true and good, and then know as much as we can, and in pro-

proportion as it is ſo, be zealouſly affected. And here as to Affection, I would propound this to be often remembred, *viz.* That we ſhould always regard not what doth ſtrongly affect our ſelves or others, what we feel to do ſo; but what ſhould do ſo. Poſſibly we have been or may be deceived, and be mightily in love with, and paſſionately deſire what is of little or no worth; while we are cold to things which are really of much more excellent Uſe, Benefit and Concern in the World.

We muſt have a care of meaſuring the Goodneſs of Things by our Affections: but contrariwiſe we muſt adjuſt our Affections to the goodneſs of things diſcovered by our own Reaſon and Obſervation, divine and humane Teſtimony. And as for this laſt, let it be of the moſt wiſe, ſober, virtuous, unprejudiced, honeſt Perſons, who are therefore the moſt free from Superſtition.

It is certainly one of the moſt general and miſchievous Cheats in the World, that Men Judge things good or bad, and more or leſs ſo according to their inclinations, which are principally cauſed by paſſions: (Though not always) and not according to the ſight of good or bad Effects, which is the principal uſe of our Reaſon. We ought therefore, if we be not ſo diſpoſed, to ſtir up the greateſt Affections and maintain them in our ſelves

for

Affections and maintain them in our ſelves; for thoſe things which really are the greateſt good things; which are ſo the moſt Univerſally, the moſt Intenſly, and moſt Conſtantly: Such as are generally in Forms, and in the publick moſt likely, if compoſed and allowed by Judicious, wiſe, generouſly Religious and Pious Perſons.

The things which do moſt affect Men (we may obſerve) are ſelfiſh, ſenſible and preſent good things; ſometimes one, or t'other; or all theſe; ſuch as are our being in God's favour, our being elected, juſtified, pardoned; ſaved, when others are reprobated, condemned, puniſhed Eternally, ſometimes Riches, Plenty, Health, good Relations or Friends, Honour or the like; all which oft-times are the leaſt good things, and leaſt to be deſired compared with others: either becauſe they are but ſenſible or preſent or ſelfiſh good, or all of them. Whereas things of more univerſal and publick good Effect, Spiritual, future, ought more to be deſired, though commonly they are much leſſe. Such as to be perfectly inherently righteous and holy, to love God for himſelf, and pleaſe him, to be univerſally diſpoſed and enabled to be beneficent, or Univerſal Charity and Beneficence, ſelf-denyal, Reſignation to God's will, becauſe always for the Univerſal good, Humility, Spirituality of mind, Mortification of all our Luſts or inor-

dinate ſelfiſh appetites &c. Afterwards Wiſdom, nay all the Perfections of our Knowledg. We are more to deſire the moſt publick and Univerſal good, than our own, and therefore our perfection more than our Happineſs, the Love of God and Charity more than our own Felicity; Again, Spiritual good things more than ſenſible; future more than preſent. Our Judgment finally of the Truth, and of the degrees of the utility and Excellency of the things ſhould direct our deſires and all our Affections in our Prayers. Which Judgment (as I ſaid) we are to informe as well as we can by our own Wiſdom and Reaſon, by God's Word, and by the Teſtimony and Examples of wiſe holy and good Men (ſo far as we ſhall have reaſon impartially to think them ſo; and we muſt uſe the beſt means we can to know who are ſo) and laſtly much by a natural Senſe & conſequent Paſſions; God having made our minds ſo as to be much affected with ſome things, our Conſciences allowing it: he hath anticipated our Natures with ſuch Impreſſions, if we can diſtinguiſh them from others contracted by bodily temper, education, Example. This of Teſtimony and Example of thoſe whom we judge wiſe and good Men, is ſo conſiderable amongſt Men, and hath naturally ſo much Influence, that few Perſons are determined in their Opinions by any other reaſon: and I think it one of the reaſons

why

why a premeditated Prayer; and even a Form compoſed by a private Perſon and recited by himſelf, hath been generally prefer'd before a Form compoſed by the Publick, and recited by a private Perſon: *viz.* becauſe Men generally are moved to think and judg the things true or profitable, which are ſaid or recited, by the Teſtimony and Example of him that ſays and recites the Prayer: If he judg that it is ſo, they are apt to judg ſo too, and conſequently to be affected.

Now Men judge that he that recites a Prayer compoſed by himſelf, did and doth judge the things true and of great Concernment, and ſees them to be ſo; otherwiſe why ſhould he ſay thoſe things rather than others? But they, as they think, have not the ſame reaſon to judge ſo of him, who is obliged to recite a Prayer compoſed by another. For he is obliged to ſay and recite that and no other, and therefore he doth it; when it may be he attends not to, nor is affected with the Truth and Goodneſs of the Things he recites, any more then a School-Boy is with his Leſſon. Nay, though the Reciter of ſuch a Prayer ſhould have as many external ſigns of Reverence and Affection, as he that recites a Prayer of his own Compoſition, yet his Example and Teſtimony is not ordinarily ſo efficacious. For Men are apt

to think that that Affection may come from Cuſtome or Compliance, or the like.

But here we ſhould do well to do theſe three things:

Firſt. To look upon ſuch publick Forms as compoſed by the Publick, who moſt-what are to be preſumed wiſer than private Perſons, and that they did judge the things true, and of exceeding great Profit and Benefit, or elſe they might have choſe other things as well as thoſe, let the Reciter behave himſelf as he will.

And then Secondly, That ſome and ſurely conſiderable Men, who recite them with Affection, do it *really* in thoſe things which they judge, and becauſe they do judge them true and exceeding profitable, not only out of Cuſtome and Compliance: And then it may as reaſonably be ſuſpected that the great Affections of thoſe who recite their own Prayers oftimes (eſpecially in extempore) are forced, leaſt they ſhould ſeem could, oft-times they proceed more from their being their own, and invented by themſelves, (as we ſee Men are very apt to be much pleaſed with their own) than out of any clear ſight or Judgment of their Truth and Utility. If they do judge they are true and profitable, that very Judgment

may

may proceed from that Self-Love and Eſteem.

Thirdly. We are therefore to excite and ſtir up our Affections, (which otherwiſe) it may be are dull and ſluggiſh in Proportion to ſuch our Judgment, though we ſhould not have the Example of him that ſays or recites them. If we think not good to follow the Judgment of the Publick herein, we ſhould have great and clear Reaſon againſt it, and ſuch Modeſty as to be backward to ſignifie it.

Let all Men here, as in all Prayers, do what they can; what they ſee and aſſent to as true and Judg it good, and ſo far forth as they do ſo, let them joyn in that, and ſtir up and excite their hearty affections in that as much as they can; not through Lazineſs or Prejudice eſpecially from Revenge, wilfully neglect or reject it. We have ſaid, That the advantage of ſincere and fervent affections in diverſity of Prayers is more uſual or *general*, but not *conſtant* or *Univerſal*. For ſometimes on the contrary a form of Prayer may be more affectionately uſed. As when perſons are of a ſlow and ſtaid temper, not caring to enlarge their knowledge or their deſires, but very well content with what they have: alſo when they believing what they already have

in their Prayers to be very excellent or the very beſt, or much better then what they are likely to meet withal in any other, purpoſely keep & cheriſh their affections for thoſe things upon which they have already placed them, & withhold them from others. For then by reaſon of frequent & repeated Conjunction, their affections are far more real, ready and ſtrong to thoſe things which are contained in their Forms, then to any new things not before heard by them in other Prayers. As admiration and eſteem of any thing are cauſed by ignorance of what is better or equal to it (as it is in new things where we have not time nor perhaps ability to compare) ſo are they much more by a knowledg or belief that nothing or very few things are ſo. Such a knowledg and judgment is much more the cauſe of eſteem and love then ignorance.

If wee'l try for Example in the Lord's Prayer we may find it ſo. If we often ſay, *Our Father*, and have a clear apprehenſion of the comprehenſive ſignification of the Word, (viz.) that God is wiſely and tenderly good to us, hath brought us forth, brought us up, doth ſtill and muſt always provide for our good in all reſpects Spiritual, bodily, here, hereafter, and as often endeavour to joyn a cordial and ardent Affection of Love to this our dear Father, and joy in him: we ſhall find that by frequent uſage when we pronounce theſe

theſe words. We ſhall moſt readily have ſuch a conceit and Apprehenſion, and ſtrongeſt affections too at the ſame time. And ſo when we pray, *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes*, &c. Have we then an Apprehenſion or ſenſe of the moſt intenſe and moſt Univerſal Charity (for whom ſhall we not love, when we love our Enemies) and conjoyn we ſtrongeſt and eagreſt deſire therewith, ſend the Petition wrapped up in an inward ſigh that God would grant it us; we ſhall find upon uſe that whenever we hear or pronounce the one, we ſhall be the moſt apt and ready to have the other too. Thoſe who have piouſly and devoutly read the holy Scriptures may have oft-times experienced, that if any ſentence therein hath much affected them, the oftner they have thought thereof, the more real and ready and great hath been their Affection. There may be too much Frequency and the Succeſſion may be too quick: What Invervals of Forms are convenient and do not hinder Attention and Affection, will eaſily be known by Experience: where let us be aſſured there be no Prejudice.

As for *extempore* Prayer left to the *extempore* Memory Invention, Judgment of the Reciter whether natural or pretended to be inſpired, it hath ſo much the diſadvantage (to compare it firſt) of the other two, *viz.* publike or private Forms, and premeditated Pray-

ers; and the Inconveniencies thereof are so many more and greater, and the Conveniencies so much fewer or lesse, that it is never to be admitted where they can be had, except very rarely. As where a Person may be of such a peculiar Temper that his *extempore* may be better then his own premeditated or recited Form, and in it self too very good. Some Men may have more considerable things suggested by a quick and sudden Excitation and heating of themselves with exercise and by consequent bodily Passions, and they may give better Judgment of their Truth and Utility: than if they considered never so long, with which their Heads are dulled, Attention confounding them. Nay even according to the constant Laws of Union between body and Soul, or *naturally*, they may hereby be more generously, intellectually, divinely disposed and inclined, (viz.) to things that are large and great, and therefore to things that are future, Spiritual, of most Universal good Effect, their animal Spirits being in great Plenty subtilized, and strongly but not ungovernably agitated. Where we may observe, that governable bodily Passions are not to be always neglected, but they may be sometimes on purpose made use of and approved by our Prudence.

But except I say such a rare Case; only where a Form or premeditated Prayer cannot

not be had, an *extempore* one may ſometimes be uſed.

As where a Perſon hath not the other two preſent, or hath not Leiſure and Time to premeditated one; and yet it is expedient that ſome Prayer be recited to, as in ſome ſudden Danger.

Even in profitable Affections, much more in Senſe and Words, the other Prayers have the Advantage of *extempore* Prayer. For that Affection which is in it, is moſt-what forced and ſtrained, or excited by loud Voice and bodily Action, or by bodily Temper in general, and is not the Effect of any preceding Judgment of the Goodneſs and Truth of the Things prayed, even in thoſe very Perſons themſelves who pray, as inconſiderable as their Judgment may be, though moſt Auditors are oft miſtaken and think it is. Or their Affections are but the reliques of ſome they have formerly had, it may be, with Judgment little enough. Whence they are generally leſs and more ſuperficial than eſpecially in premeditated Prayers, where we have with Approbation pitched upon things; it is ſure they are worſe uſed and placed.

To ſpeak of it abſolutely, ſuppoſing a Man could uſe no other: ſometimes it may be worſe than none at all, ſometimes better than none, ſometimes very good. It is according as

as the Persons are, and their present Temper according to their Quickness of Apprehension and Memory both of Things and Consequences, and of Words, whether just when they are praying, or sometime before invented by themselves, or learnt from others. Or as is usually expressed according to the Quickness of their Invention, Memory and Judgment. Moreover, according to the variety, truth, profitableness of their thoughts accompanied with suitable affections, or as useth to be said, according as their Minds are well furnished with matter both of sense and language, and with due affections formed judiciously, or at present by a certain generous habitual Temper of Mind, excited towards things suitably to their Degree or Value and Excellency. I say, according as these are more or less in a Person, his *extempore* Prayer will be better or worse, and he may more or less trust to it. But it is very rare, that those very Persons who by reason of these Qualities can perform *extempore* Prayer well, cannot with some Premeditation do it far better. But as for the most part of Persons, they are so deficient in them, that it is far better they should themselves make a Form of their own, or use another's, or at least premeditate, and sometimes it were better they should altogether abstain and omit to pray at all. For slowness and faultringness of Conceit and Utte-

Utterance for want of quick Memory, Invention, Judgment; Tautologies for want of either paſt Invention, or preſent ready Memory. Falſhood, Trivialneſs, Unprofitableneſs, Miſchievouſneſs of things, and Improprieties and Unfitneſs of Speech for want of paſt or preſent good Judgment, and preſent Memory; ſo alſo vain and groundleſs Affections ſtrained and forced by bodily Temper, Loudneſs of Voice or ſtirring Actions only, are certainly all of them ſcandalous and contemptible things to be prevented, and better to be put into their Room, if it can be without greater Inconveniencies (as ſure there may) by the uſe of either a publike or private Form made by others or one's ſelf, or by Præmeditation.

Extempore Prayers eſpecially ſpoken with real or ſeeming great and counterfeit Paſſions, may be oft-times ſo hurtful, that there had better be none at all. For thereby thoſe who do not ſee nor underſtand their Defects in thoſe things before-mentioned, get a Habit of imitating them, have their Minds (which are capable of ſo much better things) furniſhed with, and their Affections raiſed to Non-ſenſe, that is, only Words and Sounds, or to Things extraordinarily confuſedly conceived and underſtood, and thoſe mean, traſh, falſe, trivial or miſchievous, particularly ſometimes as relating to God, impious.

But

But for those who have Knowledg and Judgment enough to observe those Defects, let them be never so candid, at least they cannot joyn with them so far as their Prayers are to them such: and then they are justly offended to see so useful an Office so much spoyled and ill performed, so unbecomingly trifling, ly or mischievously, when it might be done much better. Some, and very many, less wise and candid, are disposed to neglect and despise, by too rash a Conclusion from one or more Persons particular Defects and Infirmities, the whole Prayer, his Person and his Religion too; and it may be oft-times if not all Religion, yet all the external publick Offices thereof; and think that truly there is no good to be gotten by them, that they are childish or vulgar things not becoming Men but of ordinary degree of Understanding in the Value of things, and that they may spend their Time elsewhere better.

I say again, so far forth as a Man hath well considered and judged of Plenty and Variety of Things true and profitable, whether by himself invented, or learned from other wise and pious Men; these things also cloathed with fit and convenient Expressions, and is of a ready, easie, strong Memory to retain and use them: so far as he is of a quick Invention and Judgment to discern the Verity and Usefulness of things at present suggested or invented

vented from their Likeneſs to or Conſequence from thoſe things, which he hath deliberately from his own Reaſon or others Teſtimony judged true and uſeful, and hath been accordingly diſcreetly affected: So far is the Man more fit to uſe and truſt to *extempore* Prayers with others.

Add hereto, That Frequency of uſe of either a Form, or premeditated or *extempore* Prayer, or all of them, and of judicious Reflection thereupon, may make it more eaſie and allowable; inſomuch that Variety of true, uſeful and juſt things, will never fail ſpeedily to preſent themſelves to ſome Perſons. What comes to their Mind, and what they ſpeak, may be but as it were Pieces of various Forms, premeditated and compoſed by others or themſelves, when they were beſt able and in beſt Temper, a little altered or diſpoſed by a preſent Prudence. And therefore they may be as true, juſt, important, and more ſeaſonable and fervent, than the Things in any one or more Forms of others or their own compoſing, when poſſibly they were not in ſo good a Temper; eſpecially if the Perſon is poſſeſſed habitually with holy and generous Affections. But how few are there who are ſuch in any conſiderable Degree?

As for ſecret Prayer, there needs no *extempore* Prayer at all; a Man may take what Time he pleaſeth to find out and judg what is moſt

moſt fit to be prayed, and particularly what he would have; he may put what Interval he pleaſeth between every Sentence, and affect himſelf with it; and therefore ſurely it would be a very unadviſed thing, for him to ſay any thing that ſhould happen to come next.

As for Inſpiration, that is, Invention, Memory, Judgment, Affection excited and furniſhed by God's ſpecial extraordinary Influence and Action, it is a thing by no means now to be truſted to in our Prayers with others. Men are very naturally fond of this, as a Sign of great Favour with God Almighty; and a probable one it is indeed, but not a neceſſary one. For God may inſpire a bad Man, or at leaſt worſe than ſome not inſpired, not for his own but for others ſake; and a very ſincerely, generouſly holy and righteous Man, ſelf-denying, pious, juſt, charitable, humble and ſpiritually minded, is a far more excellent Perſon than an inſpired one, unleſs it be with a greater degree of habitual Holineſs. Nor is the *abſolute* and *ultimate* affectation and Love of any ſuch great Privilege as Inſpiration, any better than a Branch of ſpiritual Pride, which it's likely was much the Fault of the Church of *Corinth*, and the firſt Chriſtians, when God was pleaſed for the Honour and Propagation of Chriſtian Religion, to grant it often and liberally to all ſorts of Chriſtians. St. *Paul* exhorteth

exhorteth them to covet earneſtly the beſt Gifts, ſuch as Propheſying, Tongues, *&c.* (all which are but the Perfections of our natural Faculties, wrought by God's ſpecial immediate Action) but yet tells them, he would ſhew them a more excellent way, and that was *Charity*. He ſaith alſo of himſelf, though he had all thoſe Gifts (and that in the greateſt degree) of Eloquence, Propheſying, underſtanding of the obſcureſt and deepeſt Myſteries, univerſal Knowledg, Power of working Miracles, *&c.* yet if he had not *Charity* to his Brethren, expreſſing it ſelf in all thoſe lovely Effects mentioned by him, it all profited nothing, he was a ſounding Braſs, and a tinkling Cymbal, a thing that made a great noiſe, was much admired, but vainly, it did no good, nay it may be harm. Thoſe three Chapters of St. *Paul*'s firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinth*, (viz.) 12, 13, and 14. would do well to be often read by thoſe who are apt to pretend too huffingly to, and value themſelves too much by the Gifts of the Spirit. That generous and ſincerely holy Man deſerves more to be honoured for his Wiſdom, Spirit and Temper expreſſed in that and ſuch like Places, than for all the Myſteries he taught, and all the Parts and Gifts he had, and all the Miracles he wrought; and it is to me a much ſurer Sign than they are, of his Inſpiration, and the divine

vine Superintendency and Care over him in all the reſt he wrote.

I know no ſufficient reaſon to deny that God by his immediate ſpecial Influence may aſſiſt or help our Invention, Memory, Judgment and Affection in Prayer: but then I add, who knows when and how much it may pleaſe him ſo to do? That I think it is principally to the diligent, in Conjunction with our Care, Endeavour, Uſe of Means, which is none in *extempore* Prayer: but in a premeditated Prayer a Man doth or ſhould ſet himſelf to invent what is moſt uſeful and needful; to examine what is true, or to take heed that nothing falſe is ſaid by him; to cauſe himſelf to attend to what is true and important; to awake and inflame Affections thereto, by propoſing or urging the reaſonableneſs of them; by upbraiding his Infirmity, Dulneſs, Ignorance, Miſtake, Slavery in his Senſeleſneſs of the beſt things. I think too that this Aſſiſtance is principally in holy Affections, that is, ſuch as are rightly directed and moderated to the moſt excellent Objects, and in their due Degree, more than in Senſe and Words; alſo principally upon ſome extraordinary Occaſion either for the great need of its being well performed juſt at ſuch a time, or the neceſſary want of Time; and it may be of natural Ability of the Perſon if in-

nocent

nocent and humble, and therefore always especially to the innocent, and particularly the humble and modest; not to the lazie, negligent, weak yet vainly conceited, presumptuous and proud Person. I rather think that they have most of this Assistance who least pretend to it, who least therefore wilfully neglecting their own endeavours trust to it; but only modestly think it may be sometimes in some things; and whether it be so, or be not so, do attribute all they are or do or can perform *ultimately* to God, whether it be by natural Parts, or habitual Gifts or present Influence; who acknowledg that *all holy Desires, all good Counsels, all just Works do proceed from him*, and thank God that he is pleased to do any good to others by them; though they should be very well pleased too if it were done by others, so it were done.

If it pleased God to afford a greater degree of this Assistance to do good this way, there is no good Man I suppose but would be very glad thereof, and willingly receive it, and thank God for it: And for ought I know it may be afforded to the World in greater degree, First, in respect of good and holy Inclinations and sense of Soul called *Graces*, and then in those Perfections of our understandings which are called *Gifts*, before the whole design of Christianity, and consequently the present condition of Man-kind here on Earth

hath and End; but then we must certainly know it to be so when it is. The Badness, the Pride and Vanity of many Persons, their self-conceit, swelling with a false opinion that they are so highly favoured of God, Contempt of others because inferiour to them in this respect, want of Humility, Modesty, Charity, also Falshood, Uncertainty, Unintelligibleness to other Persons wise and Pious, in the Reciter's Non-sense, or great Confusion, Trivialness and Uselessness of things, and consequently the Pedantry or Childishness of the Persons, sometimes also the mischievousness of things are sufficient signs in their degree of Non-inspiration, and therefore of the Madness and Contemptibleness of such pretences. They are signs even of want of ordinary consideration, Reason, Judgment, of Ignorance, Dulness, Confusion, Error, and yet Rashness and Confidence.

And where Prayers and Persons are better and the clean contrary, yet surely full easily may all that we now see, be, by the Goodness of the natural Parts before mentioned, and by habitual Gifts, that is, those Faculties endowed with some Perfection belonging to them by God's special Influences some time or times in our Lives, without the special Influence of the Spirit just then. And we find *extempore* Performances in other matters to be performed as well, as in those divine Offices; as in Ora-

Orations, in common diſcourſe eſpecially when warmed with Talking and Paſſions, and yet theſe are attributed only to natural Parts, which in ſome Men are very quick and laſting, of great Variety, converſant about more than ordinary things, and may not unfitly be termed natural *Enthuſiaſm*. Of which the bodily cauſe (according to the Laws of union of Body and Soul which God hath fixed) is Subtilty, Solidity, Copiouſneſs of Spirits, a well conſtituted Brain, Organs of Speech, and the Nervous paſſages of the Brain thereto, &c.

I would try any Man who ſhould pretend to be even a Prpohet, and did even work Miracles by ſuch Signs as I have now mentioned, and they may reaſonably in ſome degree overweigh the greateſt appearing Miracles themſelves. For I may have more certainty and evidence that ſome things are unworthy of God, or that they cannot be done by, or proceed from ſuch a Nature as Gods is; then that any effect is cauſed by God's immediate action or influence, for the Confirmation of any thing taught or affirmed, and not by ſome natural and ſecond cauſes.

And we ſee accordingly the *Jews* were admoniſhed by *Moſes*, that even if one ſhould riſe up who ſhould foretell things to come, and yet teach that *Jehovah* was not the true God, but ſhould draw

them to other Gods (and there is the like reaſon in all Truths as clearly manifeſted by Revelation or Reaſon) he was not to be believed that God had ſent him, but to be rejected and put to death. *Deut.* 13. *v.* 1.

As for thoſe poor deluded or Hypocritical Men, who ſit in deep ſilence a great while, and of a ſudden break out with abundance (as is ſaid) of Non-ſenſical ſtuff, or Prophetical Phraſes cluttered together, and then think themſelves inſpired by the Spirit, moſt probably their ſilence was at firſt affected; or if not, their bodily Temper was only dull, and after ſome time their Brains were agitated with thoughts, and their Hearts with Paſſions, or their Temper was fortuitouſly changed, (as moſt Men are apt to be ſilent and talkative once in two or three Hours) or at leaſt the Examples of others make them begin to talk too, and to ſhew the Spirit comes upon them. They may do well alſo to have a care there be not ſomething a worſe cauſe, when Men ſo proudly and wilfully expoſe themſelves to ſuch miſerable ſottiſh Deluſions.

Theſe few things I have at preſent upon the mentioning theſe Sorts or kinds of Prayer only briefly ſuggeſted.

If one had a mind accurately and particularly to determine in this matter a *Form, premeditated* and *extempore Prayer* would be conſidered, firſt abſolutely, with each ones conveniencies

niencies and Inconveniencies, good or bad Effects; in which again are to be obſerved the degrees of their Extenſion as to Subjects, that is Perſons; of their Intenſion, of their Duration or their Frequency: in three words their degrees of greatneſs, as to *Extenſion*, and *Intenſion*, and of *Laſtingneſs*. And then again they would be conſidered comparatively, which had moſt or leaſt Conveniencies or Inconveniencies (for all things have ſome of both;) and whether the uſing of one of them or a mixture of all of them would be beſt to obtain the greateſt Conveniencies or good Effects with the leaſt bad ones.

A Method which is to be obſerved in the Determination of the goodneſs, abſolute or comparative of all things. To do which, to any good Effect, Men muſt be impartial and indifferent to any thing but the Truth out of Charity to Mankind, (as in all other Caſes of Controverſie and Debate it is perpetually to be admoniſhed) and diſpoſe themſelves by that and other Means to find out and look at both the Conveniencies and Inconveniencies, the good or bad Effects of any of them; not to obſerve and regard only the Conveniencies of one, but not its Inconveniencies, and ſo cry it up; and contrariwiſe the Inconveniecies of auother but not its Conveniencies, and ſo make a great cry againſt it, accordingly as they chance to be affected. They ought

alſo well to inform themſelves in the true Goodneſs of Things and their Degrees from the diſtinct ſight of the Natures of things, or of their Effects; in which laſt they are to be eſpecially careful they fall not into the moſt common Error of Judging ſome things which are only conſequent upon or concomitant with others, to be entirely their Effects; when as they are not ſo at all, or but in part, and are to be attributed to other things altogether or principally. From whence it is eaſie to ſee that it is not for every conceited hot-headed raſh perſon to determine the Conſtitution of it, not ſo much as in a private Aſſembly, much leſs in a National Church; but they ſhould be upright, virtuous, godly, pious, ſpiritual, conſiderative, attentive, of good knowledge and experience in humane Nature eſpecially, both in themſelves and others; or in two words, they ought to be the moſt wiſe and good. To Men of clear, truly informed and comprehenſive Minds there appears ſometimes much leſs & ſometimes much more difference between things than to the Vulgar and the Generality, who withal remember how ſhort their comprehenſion is. And ſometimes it is the unhappy Lot of thoſe who ſee but little difference between things that are fiercely contended for, and by the prejudice of great blind Paſſions judged great, to be thought or to be pretended to be thought cunning, ſelfiſh

and

and unconſciencious Men: Their calmneſs and almoſt indifferency being judged to be the effect of ſelf-intereſt, complyance, deſire of quiet or eaſe, *&c.* when it is truly one of their wiſdom and charity; And they are not ignorant that ſelf-intereſt is as well if not better generally advanced in the World by activity and fierceneſs, though ill-governed. For this ſort of men are counted at leaſt notable Inſtruments by thoſe who diſcern more but are cunningly ſelfiſh. Though there are men too of thoſe ſly Principles, who may mix themſelves with truly wiſe, and ſincerely honeſt perſons for ſhelter and defence. And this for the Third Diſtinction.

SECT. IV.

IV. A Fourth is commonly into Publick, Private and Secret Prayer, which may better be thus, *(viz.)* into that alone, and that with others.

That with others may either be with ſome ſelect ſmaller Company, as that with Families (the oftner the better, daily at leaſt) or Friends, eſpecially ſick Perſons, or in any Diſtreſs and Affliction, which is called Private; or with an unlimited Aſſembly or Company, as many as can conveniently hear the Voice of him who muſt recite the Prayer

in which they are all to joyn; (such as our Parochial Congregations) which is called the *Publick* Prayer, or a *Common* Prayer that is common to all of that Congregation, or to many Congregations.

Secret Prayer, or that which is alone in ones Closet or Chamber or any retired Place, is usually most profitable to each particular Person, because a Man may there more particularlize his Wants, his Sins or Faults, which he begs the favour of God to supply to mend in him, to prevent, to pardon: Also because he may take more time to meditate upon and consider any of the Ingredients in a Prayer before mentioned, any thing he prays, and so more affect himself: Also because he need not be so solicitous about Words and Expressions, Order, and Coherence; and so may more firmly intend his Mind to the Sense and holy Affections of Soul in his Prayer, and that to one or as few things as he will: Though it may be advisable for him especially whose Office it is to pray with others, or to treat of those things, to use himself to cloath his Sense and Affection with Words and Expressions. For these I say, and other reasons, secret Prayer may be most profitable to any one particular Person.

But then Publick Prayer is most extensively so. That is, to most Persons, and that at a time. For every one's behaving themselves

ſelves reverently and attentively, and with thoſe fit and proper Signs of their ſincere and ſerious inward Worſhip of Almighty God, is a Teſtimony and Example to every one concerning the Worſhip we owe and ought to have to that all-perfect Being; and doth ſo encourage Men to worſhip God, that they are ſo far from being aſhamed thereof, that they are aſhamed not to do it, having for certain no better reaſon why they ſhould not. They ſee it the general Opinion and Practice of all Men. This doth maintain a general Senſe of God in the World, and oft-times doth much good, and the World would be much worſe (as bad as it is) if it were not for thoſe publick Acknowledgments and Worſhip in Prayer and other Offices performed to him. Beſides the ſight of ſo many Perſons, even as many as can aſſemble together, worſhiping God at the ſame time, puts us in Mind, as being the moſt natural as well as commanded ſign (more than any words) that God is abſolutely Supreme to all, above all, that he knows all is relatively good to all, the common Parent, Suſtainer, Benefactour, Friend to all. This makes us the more to attend to the Greatneſs of God's Perfections, and to have a more magnificent Opinion of him, more to admire him, love him, fear him, obey him, or in one Word to worſhip him. The *Publick* Worſhip therefore

is

is a thing moſt ſutable to and required b
God's Greatneſs and Excellent Majeſty, th
is, it is the beſt ſign of our Opinions of A
and Obedience to him for his infinite Per
ctions. It is an Auguſtneſs and Magnificen
he is worthy of, nay it is infinitely below hi
but it is all we can do.

If all the Creatures in Heaven and Ear
could meet together at the ſame time in ſo
part of this material World, his Temple,
fall down before him and worſhip him,
pray to him, to praiſe him, to hear his Wi
profeſs Obedience to him, it would be fi
more agreeable to the infinite Excellency
his Nature. And that this may be the E
fect of our *Publick* Worſhip, we are all
us to bring our Hearts well diſpoſed and
fected with Reverence, Honour, Love a
Praiſe, Truſt in him, Obedience to him, wi
all the Parts of inward Worſhip before me
tioned, and to expreſs and ſignifie thoſe b
ſome or other of the moſt natural ſigns
Speech and Geſture, ſuch as are compoſe
Looks, Eyes lifted up or fixed, lifted u
Hands, erected Bodies, bended Knees, o
which there are infinite. Natural, I ſay,
not affected. Theſe Signs are the externa
Worſhip of God. And for to ſee a compan
of ſerious and diſcreet Peoplewith ſuch Car-
riages and Demeanour, is a very pleaſing
Sight, and draws eaſily to Imitation.

Long

Long and fierce hath been the Contention and Strife amongſt us concerning this *external Worſhip*, but too certain a Sign and Cauſe of the Decay and Neglect of the *internal Worſhip* before mentioned. For thoſe whoſe Minds are ſeriouſly and really taken up with ſo noble and high an Employment as the Contemplation, Admiration of God's infinite Perfections, a ſincere and ardent Love, obediential Reſolutions, Truſt, Joy, Acquieſcence in God, are very little ſolicitous concerning any the external Signs thereof, or ſeldom take any Notice of them but when and ſo far as they obſerve them to be any Hindrances or Helps in themſelves or others to the internal things ſignified, which oft-times is very little and uncertain. Nevertheleſs no Men have more and more proper natural Signs of inward Worſhip or Devotion than they; no Mens Carriages and Demeanors more ſhew it than theirs. And as it is a Sign (I ſpeak of fierce *Contention about*, not the *Uſe* of external Signs) ſo it is a Cauſe of the Neglect of the internal Worſhip of God. For it calls all Mens Thoughts and Affections from it, ſo that they hardly ever mind it neither in Publick nor Private. You ſhall rarely hear thoſe Perſons who are of this Temper ſpend one Minute or two in any ſerious and affectionate Diſcourſe concerning the Nature of God or his Actions, his Attributes and infinite Perfections

ctions, and his displaying of them in his Creation, Preservation, Providence or Government of the Universe, and consequently what Opinions and Affections become his Creatures that are capable towards him: or concerning the reasonableness of any Virtue or Grace he hath commanded from its excellent uses in the World; in these things they are very ignorant and cold, and rarely, I say, shall you hear from them these things, but for a Minute or two: But Disputes of many hours with fiery Eyes, and foaming Mouths concerning Times and Places, and Garbs and Postures, the Signs and external Circumstances of internal Worship of God. Moreover this habituates Mens Minds to little and sensible things, and makes them inept for those truly great and spiritual, unfit to apprehend and be affected with them: Whence they are filled with Superstition, that is, a great Zeal and Esteem for and consequently an Opinion of the Acceptableness of those small things to God, and little or none for those spiritual things which are vastly greater. This is the Temper generally of the Vulgar even in all other Matters through Ignorance and Sensuality whereby they are affected with onely personal, sensible and present good things.

The Controversie is not whether there ought to be any external Signs, and other not neces-

neceſſary or changeable Circumſtances in publick Divine Worſhip: (for all among all Sects acknowledge and practice it, and cannot but do ſo) but whether there ought to be any inſtituted and commanded by any particular Church which are not commanded in Scripture by Chriſt or his Apoſtles. The Affirmative of which Queſtion is undoubtedly true. And it is ſomewhat the more ſtrange it ſhould be doubted or denyed by any Society of Chriſtians (if ſome may be ſo called) when they themſelves find it plainly neceſſary to practice accordingly. For I do not think there is any one of the wildeſt of them who do not by conſent and agreement, (contrary to which they will not permit any one of their Society to act) uſe external Signs of inward Worſhip and other not abſolutely neceſſary Circumſtances which never were commanded or uſed by Chriſt or his Apoſtles. Which uſage and practice, though it have not ſome Circumſtances of a Law or Command: yet it hath the Power and Force thereof, and as much reſtrains Liberty. For Example, Some of thoſe Perſons who are of that Perſwaſion, and therefore ſay a Church hath not Power to command him who Officiates in the Church to wear a white Garment: yet they will not permit him to wear any other than a black as a ſign of Gravity (though it is ſaid in *Japan* they uſe white for *Linſchot. Itinrar.*

for a ſign of Mourning, and therefore I ſhould think of Gravity too & black for a ſign of joy) or at leaſt any other light or gaudy colour: they will not permit him the Garb of a Tradeſman or a Souldier; none of which things are particularly any where forbidden or commanded againſt by Chriſt or his Apoſtles: Nay it is more likely that in their Preaching they uſed the Habits of Men of their Profeſſion or Quality in their Country. So moſt of thoſe Perſons (for ſome I have heard affirm the contrary) who will not for the ſame reaſon permit any Church to enjoyn kneeling at the Lord's Supper: yet they themſelves will not permit any Man to take it in our Table or Meal Poſture and therefore with his Hat on, which is not commanded againſt by Chriſt or his Apoſtles: Nay it is moſt likely it is contrary to the Example of Chriſt with his Diſciples. For it is not much to be doubted but that they took it in the Manner they uſed to diſcumb to eat, (*viz.*) with their Heads covered according to the then Cuſtom of that Age and Country. The like may be ſaid of the Time, (*viz.*) Evening, and of many other Uſages.

The Jewiſh Church had always this Liberty and Privileg, of inſtituting and commanding things in the external Worſhip of God, ſo they were not contrary to any thing that God had commanded; and accordingly it was made

made uſe of in abundance of Inſtances, as hath been moſt evidently proved by ſome late learned Men: To which many more might be added, if this were a Place to diſcourſe the thing ſo largely. The whole Synagogical Worſhip is one comprehenſive Inſtance thereof, or elſe the Records we have of *Moſes*'s Law and the ſucceeding Ages of the *Jewes* Affairs are very deficient. There are many parts thereof which have poſitive Teſtimony of their Inſtitution by the Governours of the Jewiſh Church; as the reading of their *Haphtaroth* or their Sections of the Prophets in their Synagogues every Sabbath day, which was commanded upon the Occaſion of *Antiochus Epiphanes*'s prohibiting them the reading of their Law, and was continued ever after with their reading the Sections of their Law when they had Liberty to do that. And yet the *Jewes* were a ſmall People, and it was infinitely more eaſie to determine every Circumſtance in the external Worſhip of God for them, than for all the Chriſtian World which is to comprehend all Mankind of infinite Variety of natural Tempers, Cuſtomes, and Conſtitutions. For which reaſon (to give one Example only) what is amongſt us a univerſal Sign, Natural or by Cuſtom (which moſt-what hath foundation in ſome natural Temper) of Honour and Reverence, or the Abſence of which is a ſign of Irreverence and want of Honour

to

to God in his publick Worſhip; this is not ſo among other Nations, but it may be of Contempt or ſome ill Quality. For Men to uncover their Head amongſt us is a ſign of Honour, and not to uncover it, is a ſign of Irreverence or want of Honour to any Perſon with whom we converſe, or from whom we deſire any thing, and therefore to God: but it is not ſo among the Eaſtern People, the *Chineſes* and *Turks*. Wherefore the covering of the head in Prayer is not except in ſome rare Circumſtances to be permitted among us, but it may amongſt them, as it is. And conſequently neither of them could have been univerſally commanded by Chriſt or his Apoſtles.

It is true this Power of the Church may be alſo ill uſed, and Conſtitutions in the external Worſhip of God may be ſuch and ſo many as to hinder and not help his internal Worſhip; and ſo may the Legiſlative and Executive Power of every Government in many things be ill applied: but the Inconveniencies or Miſchiefs of taking this Power quite away are infinitely greater than thoſe of the ill uſe of it, according to Reaſon and the Experience of all Ages; or elſe there had been no Government in the World before this. For uſually, what hath been always the general Practice of the World hath been found by Experience to be better than its

Omiſſion

Omiſſion, all Circumſtances conſidered. It is poſſible too that Conſtitutions may be ſo miſchievous as to be ſufficient Cauſes of Separation from any particular Church. And then only they are ſo when there are greater Miſchiefs and evil Conſequences of them than there are of Separation, and great indeed muſt they then be. Which can only be determined by Revelation, God prohibiting them, or by our own Prudence. The Ignorance or the neceſſary or wilful Prejudices of ſome Men are ſtrangely great, who eaſily make every Conſtitution, of little or no Inconvenience, and ſometimes even uſeful and convenient ones, a ſufficient Cauſe of Separation. Which Perſwaſion or Temper tends moſt certainly and ſpeedily to an utter Diſſolution of every Chriſtian Society or Church; a truely great Inſtrument or Means of the Reformation and Happineſs of Mankind. For there will hardly ever be any Conſtitution which will long have the Approbation of all. But enough of this in this Place.

I ſhall only moreover very briefly mention ſome few general things concerning theſe Conſtitutions in external publick Worſhip with all due Deference and Submiſſion.

As firſt and principally that they be ſuch as may have more good Conſequences than bad, more Conveniencies than Inconveniencies; I mean univerſally in reſpect of Sub-

ject, Degree, and Time, or of Extenſion, Intenſion, and Duration. I know this is a Conſideration of vaſt and unlimited Extent, but I am well aſſured that there is no other abſolutely univerſal Rule of all our Actions. And there are but two Ways to know what is ſo, *(viz.)* Teſtimony divine and humane, and Reaſon. Or but one, *(viz.)* our Reaſon informed by Teſtimony and Prudence: that is, by others or our own perception and ſight of things. If God hath univerſally by undoubted Revelation to others or our ſelves commanded or forbidden us any Action, we may be ſure that always to do or abſtain from it hath moſt Conveniencies, and is the beſt, though poſſibly to our Prudence there may appear ſometimes the contrary. But if there be nothing in Revelation, our own Reaſon muſt comprehend as well as it can all good and bad Effects or Conſequences of any Action or Omiſſion of any Action, making all juſt and prudent Uſe herein of humane Teſtimony, and direct us to chuſe that which hath the moſt good and the feweſt evil ones. There is no Action whatſoever, except the Will of the laſt End, *viz.* the *Univerſal good*, in which alone formal Virtue and Rectitude is to be found, which hath not both. And therefore we are not preſently to throw away a Conſtitution or Law becauſe we obſerve ſome one or more Inconveniencies in it to

ſome

ſome Perſons at one Time, nor to receive it becauſe we take notice of ſome few Conveniencies: but we are to comprehend all of both as far as we can, as to Perſons, Degree and Time, and accordingly determine.

But Secondly, One very general Sign or Inſtance (yet poſſibly not without its Exception, as ſometimes in caſe of many good mens very zealous and fierce oppoſition through ignorance, or bad mens through perverſneſs, and of complyance with other Churches) that a conſtitution in the external Worſhip of God is of more good Effect than if it were omitted, or than another in its Place, is it's Tendency the moſt in thoſe preſent Circumſtances to beget and increaſe both in us that uſe it, and in others that ſee it, the internal Worſhip of God: *(viz.)* the moſt perfect or beſt Knowledge, Apprehenſions and Opinions concerning God, his Nature, Will and Actions, the greateſt Admiration, Honour and Reverence, Love, Gratitude, Deſire, Truſt, Joy, Obedience and Imitation of God, and conſequently the moſt perfect inward Holineſs, Righteouſneſs, Virtue of Soul in all particular Branches and Inſtances: in four Words, the moſt ſincere, univerſal, vigorous, and conſtant Holineſs. And this is that which is or ſhould be principally meant by their being for *Edification.* And as for the preciſe notion

of *decent* or *decorous*, It is nothing but a Thing's being a Sign of ſome uſeful or commendable Quality in us; as contrariwiſe an indecent thing is that which is a Sign of ſome imperfection within us either natural or moral, as imprudence, rudeneſs, irreligion: but more ordinarily of that which is natural, or that which is rather only contemptible than hateful. And it is principally in order to edification by good Example.

Some of the moſt conſiderable Ways or Means how we may come to know what external Signs or any other Circumſtances do moſt tend to this Effect of Edification, are;

Firſt, A moſt ſincere and generous Love to this internal Worſhip of God in the Conſtituters themſelves, and a hearty and fervent Deſire to beget and propagate it in Men all they can, and conſequently to aim at it and propoſe it to themſelves in all their Conſtitutions, and that the moſt immediately they can and the ſhorteſt way. I ſay, the moſt immediately and the ſhorteſt way: For it ſeems to have been a frequent miſtake or non-attendance in ſome who have really deſired and intended the promotion of this internal Worſhip of God which may be called *Piety*; that they have applied themſelves to thoſe means which are ſo indeed but in ſmall degree and very

very remote, and therefore uncertain, and take up a great deal of time and pains which might have been elſewhere better employed for the ſame purpoſe. They require ſo much time and conſtancy to drive them through a long train of ſucceſſive cauſes to their end, that men ſeldom have the patience or liſt to purſue them ſo far, but ſit down and reſt themſelves and are well pleaſed with the means themſelves, forgetting or neglecting the end of them. We are not to take preſently and make uſe of every real means which may effect our propoſed end: but only thoſe which will the moſt ſpeedily and fully do it, and even of thoſe, the feweſt we poſſibly can. It is alſo certainly one of the beſt Ways to obtain an End by any certain Means, to have it perpetually and only in our Mind and Intention when we are uſing that Means. Like as it is a moſt probable Means to hit the Mark to have it ſteadily in our Eye, or to come to a certain Place to have it as frequently in our Thoughts as needs, whither we are going. And in truth the neglect of this ſeems to be one of the moſt frequent Cauſes why in many particular Churches, as the Church of *Rome*, they have ſo many Conſtitutions and Rites either perfectly uſeleſs to this great End of the inward Worſhip of God, and univerſal Holineſs of Soul; or ſo little and remotely ſubſervient thereto that

either they have ſeldom attained it, or it is not worth the trouble of the Governor and Governed to conſtitute and obſerve them; or finally they are contrary thereto, and more Obſtructions and Hindrances thereof. Other meaner and more puerile or vulgar Ends and Deſigns, as Beauty, Ornament and Pomp; or ſometimes wicked and ſelfiſh ones, as Honour, Power and Wealth have interpoſed and quite intercepted the End above mentioned. Not but that I think they all of them may honeſtly and prudently be adhibited in ſome degree in order to that End: but we are to ſcorn that ſuch mean things ſhould terminate our View, and be the ultimate end of our Conſtitutions.

Secondly, A ſecond means to know what external Worſhip conſtituted tends to the promoting of the internal Worſhip of God is the moſt exact Knowledge of humane Nature we can get: to know what external Signs or other Circumſtances of the internal Actions or Operations of our Minds do moſt naturally cauſe them in us: which are exceeding various according to the Variety of Tempers, Uſages and Conſtitutions of ſingle Perſons or whole Nations, ſome there are which may be general and well near univerſal. And here we muſt uſe principally our own Reaſon, Experience and Obſerva-

tion

tion both in our ſelves and others. We may alſo make uſe of others Obſervation and Experience, and conſequently their Uſages and Conſtitutions, as it follows in the next Particular. For what may be further obſerved in this, I refer the Reader to what he will find in the latter end of this Treatiſe, *(viz.)* concerning the due Qualifications of the external Signs both of Senſe and Operations of Soul in Prayer.

Thirdly, A third Means is all Teſtimony both divine and humane, whether we have it from expreſs Words and Injunctions as in Scripture Commands or Canons of Councils, *&c.* or from Examples and Practice. Which Teſtimony is ſo much more valuable as the Perſons are more ſincere in the End before mentioned, and more prudent and diſcreet to know and obſerve the Means which will beſt attain it. Moreover it is carefully to be obſerved whether their Teſtimony be concerning the ſame thing to be conſtituted, *i. e.* the ſame or rather the like in all Circumſtances which may alter the caſe. Whether that the Circumſtances be not ſo different, as that that external Worſhip which was then and there for Edification or promoting of the internal Worſhip of God, or univerſally of more good Conſequence than bad, be not ſo now amongſt thoſe who are

to make uſe of their Teſtimony. Particular reſpect muſt be had to the Extent of the Conſtitution, whether it were to all Chriſtians of all Places and Times, or directed only to a particular Church and for a certain time. And here in the firſt place comes in divine Teſtimony, any Conſtitutions to all Chriſtians made by God himſelf, which are undoubtedly to be perpetually obſerved as tending to the true end thereof before mentioned. Theſe, if there be any beſides the general one of Decency and Order, are to be ſought for in the New Teſtament. Next may be taken notice of all the particulars of the external Worſhip of the *Jews* appointed by God himſelf alſo in the Old Teſtament: where all Circumſtances are to be conſidered before they are imitated, and whether there were not ſome peculiar ones which made them neceſſary then, or very ſubſervient to the internal Worſhip of God or other good Effects, the which now being wanting may render them uſeleſs or of more bad than good Effect. It is certain, moſt of their Conſtitutions in their external Worſhip were of this kind; as all their Sacrifices, their diſtinction of Meats, their legal Uncleanneſſes, their Feſtivals, *&c.* It is as certain that ſome of them were ſuch as may be well imitated by moſt Chriſtian Churches now, in order to the aforeſaid Ends. As a ſetled Maintenance for the

the Officers of Religious Worſhip, and perhaps their Age when they ſhould be admitted to miniſter in thoſe holy Offices and their number, and abundance more. A great many of them have been by way of imitation introduced into very ancient Chriſtian Churches ſome ſooner ſome later, as much of the Situation, Diviſion, Form of our Churches and Church-yards in Imitation of their Temple; The Habits of thoſe who officiate in Religious Aſſemblies, Caps, Hoods, Surplices, Caſſocks, Girdles ſeem to have been in Imitation of the Prieſts Bonnet (מגבעת) of the Ephod or half-Coat (אפוד) of the Robe as our Tranſlation calls it, (מעיל) of the long Coat (כתונת) of the Belt or Girdle אבנט. The Canon for all perſons communicating three times in the year at leaſt ſeems likewiſe an imitation of the *Jewiſh* Law, that all Males ſhould appear three times in the year before the Lord in *Jeruſalem*. There are others yet which might be named of ſomewhat more conſequence. The Church of *Rome* have had ſome Rites poſſibly with no bad intent at firſt from the *Heathens* among whom the *Chriſtians* for many hundreds of years lived promiſcuouſly; as their ſprinkling Things and Perſons with their holy Water. *Villas, Domos, Templa, totaſq; Urbes aſpergine circumlatæ aquæ expiant paſſim*, ſaith *Tertullian* of the *Heathens*. *Tirtull. de baptiſ.*

Laſtly

Laſtly, may be obſerved the Conſtitution of external Worſhip in all particular Chriſtian Churches from the beginning to this time: and more eſpecially the moſt ancient, and therefore in thoſe which were founded and governed by the Apoſtles. Where again the Circumſtances are, as is before ſaid, to be conſidered with Reaſon and Prudence before we proceed to Imitation. We are not to think preſently that every Conſtitution or Practice we meet with in every Urban or Provincial Church, nay in many or moſt, is to be imitated in ours. Many might there be very laudable, and which then might the moſt obtain the Ends ſo often mentioned, which in our Circumſtances may not, but be uſeleſs or may hinder, or in general may be of very much more ill conſequence than good: as particularly, their Quantity or Quality of Faſting, Plunging in Baptiſm, *&c.* in which things there is great Difference to be made meerly upon the account of the Climate lived in. The indiſcreet and promiſcuous Retention and Introduction of Conſtitutions may well be one cauſe of their too great Multitude and Unedifyingneſs.

And I do not ſee why a Biſhop of *London* with his Clergy, or an *Engliſh* Synod may not be as well inſtructed in the means juſt now ſuggeſted and all others, to know what Conſtitutions are of beſt Effect, and moſt for Edifica-

Edification to their own Church in their Circumſtances, as a Biſhop of *Hippo* or *Conſtantinople*, or a *Carthaginian* Synod to their Church in theirs: but much better ſure may *they* conſtitute for their own Church than *theſe* can do. And particularly, I hope, it is not impoſſible, but that in Conjunction with their uſe of theſe and other Means, eſpecially the firſt of ſincere Intention, they may alſo have ſome ſpecial Influence of God to direct them: I am ſure it is but too much their own fault if they be not as capable of it as other Chriſtian Churches have been.

Thirdly, It ſeems of moſt good Effect, and particularly moſt conducible to the Promotion of the internal Worſhip of God, that there ſhould be ſome external Signs thereof, or ſome other (beſides thoſe that are abſolutely neceſſary, as Time and Place) Circumſtances conſtituted; but not many. The good Uſe of ſome to be conſtituted is a conſtant ſtanding ſenſible Teſtimony of the publick Opinion of wiſe and good Men concerning the internal Worſhip of God; what Honour, Love, Obedience, *&c.* we ought to have towards him, and how we ought to ſhew and expreſs it by the moſt fit and proper Signs; not only in thoſe few that are conſtituted, but alſo by all other which our own Prudence ſhall determine. Thoſe few are but

but for an Example of our inward Affection and external Behaviour, and for a Direction to our general Practice. Further, The ſe external things that are conſtituted may b ſomewhat helpful really to introduce and ſt up in us the due inward Operations of o Souls to God, as hath been before obſerve Further, It will prevent at leaſt ſome perſo appearing to others to be utterly negligen and careleſs thereof, to be ſenſeleſs or co temptuous of them, and conſequently th offending our Brethren, both grieving an diſpleaſing the more pious, and drawing th more weak and indifferent in Piety to a Imitation of the like Irreligion and Prophan neſs. And however Men for a few yea may be ſo ſerious in the Worſhip of God a not to need this Help; yet in a Nationa Church after ſome time of ſettlement ther will be found to be need enough, as ther ſeems to be in this very prophane Age. I the mean time it can do little or no Hurt t them who may think they do not, or ma not really want it. If none of theſe exter nal Circumſtances of Worſhip be inſtituted then they muſt all be left to the Deſire and Advice only of the Publick, or of each par ticular Governour of any Religious Aſſem bly, and conſequently to the Judgment and Choice of every particular Member, though never ſo ignorant and bad. But I believe it

doth

doth now by Experience appear (and whether it will ever be otherwiſe in larger Churches, eſpecially God knows, when in Liberty and Peace) that a very great number of Perſons are not yet ſo inwardly Religious as to abſtain from many indecent things, and ſome which are Signs of ſottiſh Irreligion, contemptuous Prophaneneſs and Pride; or to follow the Advices and Intreaties and Examples of their Superiours, eſpecially Eccleſiaſtical though of acknowledged Prudence and Piety. Nay I think at this time in this Nation Perſons are generally diſpoſed rather to do clean contrary even in things manifeſtly enough of good uſe, and which it would become Prudence, Piety and Charity to appoint. Which Humour ſeems ſtill to be of the growing ſide, and is juſt the contrary Extreme to the receiving all Inſtitutions, though manifeſtly hurtful or uſeleſs, with Veneration. Which one conſideration may afford a ſufficient reaſon for ſome diverſity of external circumſtances in the Celebration of the Lords Supper even from the practice of our Lord himſelf and his Apoſtles. *Jeſus* himſelf is not now preſent to diſtribute it. Nor are the Communicants, *Apoſtles*, to receive it. There was no need of commanding any external rite to help their ſerioufneſs, attention and affection, or to ſecure them from neglect or contempt.

But

But as it ſeems to be of very good Conſe-
quence to conſtitute ſome things in external
Worſhip, ſo it ſeems beſt to conſtitute but
few, (how few Governors muſt determine)
eſpecially if they be ſuch as do in themſelves
ſtrongly affect the Senſe, or excite much the
Paſſions of Admiration, Love or Delight,
or take up much Time and Pains: that ſo
Mens Attention be not taken off from the in-
ternal Worſhip of God. It is certain they
may be ſo many, ſo gariſh, ſo operoſe and ſo
long as to take up all a Man's Attention, plea-
ſing the Vulgar eſpecially in the ſame manner
as ſome things in a Comedy do. As if a
Man ſhould be obliged to croſs himſelf at eve-
ry Verſe of Scripture read, or to ſay, *Lord
have mercy upon us*, juſt thirty times, and
Hallelujah ten times, as I think it is reported
of the *Ruſſians* of the *Greek* Church. Nor
ſeems it leſs adviſable, that the few things
which are conſtituted be of great and mani-
feſt good uſe, and particularly for Edification,
that ſo thoſe who enjoyn, teach or uſe them,
may the more eaſily juſtifie them and not
ſpend too much time in diſpute about them,
and thoſe who are enjoyned them, being
without ſcruple, may the more chearfully ob-
ſerve them. This will alſo prevent their too
great multiplication, of which there is danger
in ſome tract of time. For if any be admitted
for the reaſon of ſome ſmall though real con-
venience,

venience, it will make way for all thoſe (and they are none knows how many) which can alledge as much.

Fourthly, It is undoubtedly beſt that the Perſons who conſtitute and appoint ſhould be not the *People*, who are generally ſo ignorant and ſelfiſh: but the *Governors* of each Church, who are generally more wiſe and generous, of more publick Spirits. The larger the Church alſo the better, for by that means the Conſtitutions are of greater Authority, and more freely obſerved; generally alſo they are both wiſer and fewer, as being made by a greater Number of wiſer and honeſter Perſons, and thoſe of different Apprehenſions and Tempers, and then as being to fit a greater Number of Perſons. The ſame may be ſaid of Articles of Belief.

The Conditions of Communion both in Doctrine and Diſcipline are likely in equal Time to be far more numerous and of leſs conſequence in leſſer Churches, ſuch as ſome amongſt us affect and contend for, than in larger: ſuch as Dioceſan, Provincial, National, and if it were poſſible, one Univerſal Church; and conſequently there will be leſs of Liberty in them. It is true, the wiſeſt and beſt men are not the greateſt number: But yet it is more probable that more of them ſhould be found in a greater number of men than

than in a leſs. Nor is it unworthy our obſervation, that among many other inconveniencies which may be mentioned, there ſeems far greater danger of a greater and ſpeedier corruption of the Chriſtian Doctrine in a vaſt number of little Independent Societies whereof ſome, if not moſt would conſiſt of very ignorant and weak perſons; than in a ſmaller number of large ones.

It is notoriouſly true indeed, that the Church of *Rome* hath monſtrouſly ſwelled the bulk of Articles of Doctrine and Rites of Diſcipline into hundreds, whereof a great number are falſe or doubtful, uſeleſs or miſchievous; but it is to be conſidered that they have been breeding and multiplying many hundreds of years. But ſo much for this not altogether a Digreſſion.

Moreover, it may be obſerved that this Publick Prayer, though made by many together, yet may be for one private Perſon. It is not neceſſary that what is here prayed ſhould be the Wants of all, but they may all join in their Prayers for one. And therefore it may here be adviſed, that if in any Prayer ſomething happen to be ſaid which doth not concern us, yet ſuppoſing it to be true and juſt, we may join in the Prayer for them who do want it, be they who they will in the Congregation. Though we do not know the particular Perſon, God doth. And ſo may

may it be in an Acknowledgment and Confeſſion of Sins. A Man may uſe it thus: *(viz.)* though he himſelf ſhould be guiltleſs, yet he may acknowledge that thoſe are Sins, and are to be acknowledged and confeſſed by thoſe that are guilty whoſoever they be in the Congregation. The like is to be done in Thankſgiving, and in ſinging of *Pſalms* which uſually contain theſe and other parts of a Prayer before mentioned. The *Pſalms* alſo are always to be recited as a hiſtory of the thoughts and affections and condition of ſome holy and devout perſon though one ſhould not have or be in the like himſelf.

SECT. V.

V. A Fifth Diſtinction of Prayers is uſually taken from the Perſons concerned. And ſo a Prayer, at leaſt many of the Ingredients in it, may be either for ones ſelf, or for other Perſons, whether the Prayer be Publick, Private or Secret. Thus our Petitions and Thankſgivings and Acknowledgments may be for the whole Creation, for all the Inhabitants of this Earth all Mankind; we may petition and thank God *for his Goodneſs to us and to all Men*, to the Church or Chriſtian Society, to the Nation of which we are Members, to the Pariſh or Place of our Habitation, to the Family in which we live,

to any Society to which we any way belong to, our ſelves, or any other part or parcel of God's Creation capable of receiving any thing from God, and acknowledging him for it according as their Wants and Capacities are. And the greater the Number of theſe is on whoſe behalf we pray or give thanks, the more comprehenſive and extended, the more fervent and enlarged ſhould we be therein. And ſo it ſhould be in our Prayers for thoſe upon whoſe good the good of others much depends, and whoſe good is a more comprehenſive and diffuſed good, ſuch as Governours of all ſorts Civil and Eccleſiaſtical, and any Perſons who have Riches, Power, Wiſdom, and Knowledge, or any ability to do good, that they may have an anſwerable Goodneſs. This kind of Prayer is eſpecially fit for Publick Prayer.

Thus I have diſpatched the Second general Head, *(viz.)* ſome of the ſorts of Prayer.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

SECT. I.

III. WE proceed to the Matter or Contents of *Prayer*, or Petition, not of *a Prayer*, which as we have ſaid conſiſts of Petition, and many other Parts, as expreſs Acknowledgment of the Divine Perfections, *&c.* which we have mentioned.

There are in General but two Qualifications of our Petitions of the things we ask.

Firſt, That they be juſt and righteous, or that it is juſt and fit they ſhould be given us; that is, procurative of or at leaſt conſiſtent with the greateſt Good of the whole Univerſe.

Secondly, That we want them. If the things be not juſt we ought not to ask them, and if we have them already we need not, though the continuance of them we may.

Now the things which it may be moſt juſt for God to give, and which we may at ſome time or other want, may be ſuch as theſe.

The principal thing to be asked and the greateſt good that we can ask, or God give, is our greateſt Perfection, *(viz.)* Holineſs, Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs, ſincere Conſcientiouſneſs, a good honeſt Mind and Heart, Virtue, Grace, as it is uſually called. All which ſignifie the ſame general thing with ſome ſmall Differences, *(viz.)* a Will habitually inclin'd to a Man's Duty, to what is right, what his ſincere Conſcience or Judgment of Right or Wrong directs him to, and commands him. We are to ask and beg of God moſt earneſtly as the greateſt Boon he can give, that he would beget or ingenerate in us Grace in ſome conſiderable degree, (for all Men have, it is likely, ſome faint and little one already; the worſt of Men hath hardly quite extinguiſhed this Tendency or Appetite after Righteouſneſs) that he would increaſe and augment make it more vigorous and ſtrong in us, and at leaſt to be ſo ſtrong, as to be prevalent over all our other Appetites and Inclinations, That we may habitually more deſire, will and love Holineſs than Riches, Honours, all ſenſual Pleaſures and Delights, finally, than all things the Heart of Man can deſire beſides: Nay, that we may love it in ſuch manner and its great Inſtance *Univerſal Love* with its Object *the greateſt good of the whole Univerſe*, as to love it only, and in all other things; or all other things

things for its sake; that *they* may make us more holy, universally charitable humble, *&c.* or help us to obtain the Ends thereof, that they may make us more to *be good*, or to *do good*. Further, that God would make us more universally and more constantly so in all things and to our Lives End: That God would quite extinguish and mortifie in us the Inordinacy and Immoderacy of all our Appetites and Affections, that is, our Lusts: That our Affections may never be to any other Object whatsoever *ultimately* and for it self, and never beyond its due Measure; but habitually always for the End, and in such Measure as that we may do the most good, save our own Souls, (that is, bring them to a State of the greatest *Perfection* and *Happiness*) and please God. That our Affections inordinate and immoderate may cease so to be, and be turned *ultimately* to and in the highest degree placed upon Holiness and the things so often mentioned, to which we were before but too dead and cold; that is, that we may be converted and renewed. That God would give us to reflect seriously upon the Badness and Sinfulness of our past and present Tempers and Actions, to be sorry heartily for it, to hate and detest it inwardly between God and our Consciences in the highest degree, and resolve to break off such courses, praying to God im-

fortunately for his help so to do, and that we may be forgiven for Christ's sake all that is past; that is in one word, that God would give us Repentance.

Some of these things thus understood and such like may be expressed in Sentences of Scripture, thus:

That God would grant unto us and help us, *to present our selves a living Sacrifice holy acceptable to God, our most reasonable Service*, and that we may not *be conformed to this World*, (to the wicked Manners thereof) *but be transformed by the renewing of our Mind*, that we *may prove what is the acceptable and perfect Will of God.* (*Rom.* 12. *Verse* 1.) That God would quicken us, when *dead in Trespasses and Sins*, and walking according to the Course of this World. (*Ephes.* 2. *Verse* 1.) That we may *put off concerning the former Conversation, the old Man which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, and be renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, and put on the new Man, created after God in Righteousness and true Holiness.* (*Ephes.* 4. *Verse* 22.) That we may *deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and live righteously, soberly and godly in this present World:* We especially to whom the saving Grace and Favour of God by Christ hath appeared and been made manifest, (*Titus* 2. *Verse* 11.) That we may *cast off the Works of Darkness, and put on the Armour of Light.* All Virtues

Virtues commended to us by Chriſtianity, which gives us ſo large and clear a Knowledge thereof. And *walk honeſtly as in the Day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs*, &c. *but put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt* (that is, his Temper and Spirit which he was of and which he taught, a Temper and Life according to the Doctrine and Example of Chriſt) and *make no Proviſion for the Fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof.* (*Rom.* 13. *Verſe* 12.) That as Chriſt's or as Chriſtians we may *crucifie the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts.* (*Gal.* 5. *Verſe* 24.) In this and ſuch like manner we may conceive, expreſs and ſignifie our hearty unfeigned eager Deſires, that God would make us in general holy, righteous, good, conſcientious, honeſt, virtuous, regenerate, converted, renewed, penitent, and keep us ſo, and make us more and more ſo to our Lives end.

But this in general may moſt often not ſuffice: but we may proceed further to the general Inſtance or Subject of Righteouſneſs, (*viz.*) Univerſal Charity or Benevolence to all the Univerſe, God and all his Creation; and then to particular Virtues, which are but ſo many Inſtances or Inſtruments of Univerſal Charity.

As Love to God for himſelf, as a Being infinitely perfect, and moſt capable of Happineſs, and therefore rejoycing that his Per-

fection and Happineſs is ſo great as to receive no Addition. Further, to love him without any reference to our ſelves, ſeparately, but as a Being infinitely good and benign, and uſing all his other Perfections of Power and Knowledge to do good with to all his Creation, of which we have a ſhare, even all that we have that's good, being the Effect thereof; nay all evil things (abſolutely in themſelves conſidered) to any particular Creature are permitted and diſpoſed by him for the good of his whole Creation, and therefore all things that are come from his Goodneſs. And this is that very Perfection of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs and its only Inſtance Univerſal Love and Benevolence in God, which we before were to deſire for our ſelves; and when we pray to God that we may love him, if we have but a tolerable diſtinct conceit of him, it is principally that we may love Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, Univerſal Beneficence and Love it ſelf. For theſe are the principal Attributes of his Nature; *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love* therefore *dwelleth in God.* Pray we therefore to God that he would work in us a ſincere ſtrong habitual Love to himſelf, that we might love him *with all our Hearts and Minds, and Might and Strength and Underſtanding.* (*Matt.* 22. *Verſe* 37.) And that he would *direct our Hearts into the love of himſelf.* 2 *Theſſ.* 3. *Verſe* 5.

Next

Next to this may follow Charity: which more precisely signifies Love and Good Will to all Creatures. To do which to each particular with the limitation of its *desert*; *i.e.* so as is most consistent with our Universal Love to all, and as far as we see effective of the greatest good of the whole, is the true notion of *Justice*, or giving to every one his due. I say to all Creatures within our Cognizance, according to our Knowledge of them, to the holy Angels, holy Souls departed hence, all Mankind, to all Christians, our own Country, Town, Family, Relations. We are to apply our general Will and Power of doing good to the whole by doing good to each particular, as we are best able and can best reach; and this all the ways we can; which being the various kinds (distinguished by Means or Parts or other Logical Respects) of doing good, or of Charity (as is before said) are so many Graces or Virtues. Pray we, therefore, that God would make us just, merciful, compassionate, chatable in Alms-giving, candid, covering of faults, most ready to take notice of and commend what is good, to pass by and conceal what is bad in men, patient, forbearing, forgiving, liberal, hospitable, ready to visit, relieve and comfort the Sick, those in Want, the languishing in Anguish, Pain and Grief, to contribute what we can to, and rejoyce

joyce in the good of any one, particular
in others Plenty of the good things of
World, ſo long as they would uſe them w
But eſpecially to inſtruct, exhort, encoura
give them good Example, wiſh they mig
uſe all good things well, and not be
unworthy and undeſerving of them th
neither God, nor good Men may think it
they ſhould have them; to adventure our o
Credit and good Opinion among others, a
our Eaſe, if it be neceſſary, for the Diſco
ragement and Suppreſſion of Vice.

Some of thoſe things we may expreſs
the Words of Scripture. That we may *ſu*
fer long, *be kind*, *envy not*, *vaunt not*
ſelves, *not be puffed up*, &c. (1 *Cor.* 13. *Verſe*
Further, that we may be inſpired with th
moſt ſelf-denying Temper, refuſing our ſel
Pleaſure *ultimately* and *abſolutely*; conſequen
ly that our Corruptions or Luſts, that is,
our ſelfiſh and immoderate Appetites and I
clinations, which are corrupt, might be clea
ſed and mortified, ſuch as Malice, Hatre
Revenge, Anger, Wrath, Pride, Ambitio
Vain-glory, falſe ſelf-Conceit, Covetouſne
Affectation of Superiority in any thing,
Equality, Liberty, Deſire to be feared, ſu
unto, Contemptuouſneſs, Obſtinacy, Self
Will, Peeviſhneſs, Envy, Slander and De
traction, Intemperance, Luxury, Laſciviou
neſs, Chambering, and Wantonneſs, Imme

derate

erate and Inordinate Love of Games, bodily
r mental Exercises and Actions, &c.

In words of Scripture, That we might not
ulfil these Lusts of the Flesh, *(viz.) Adultery*,
ornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, He-
ed, Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Se-
itions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drun-
nness, Revelling and such like; which things
hosoever do shall not inherit the Kingdom of
od. But that we be filled *with all the Fruits*
f the Spirit, Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffer-
g, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness,
emperance, Galat. 5. *Verse* 16. &c. That *all*
itterness, Wrath, Anger, Clamour, Evil-
peaking and Malice may be put away far from us,
nd that we may be *kind one to another, ten-*
r hearted, forgiving one another even as God
r Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Ephes. 4.
erse 31. That we may *add to our Faith Vir-*
e, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, God-
ness, Brotherly-kindness, Charity, that these
hings may be in us and abound; that as
Christians we *may not be unfruitful in the*
knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pet. 2. 1.
erse 5.

Further still, In order to all these pray we
r other excellent instrumental Graces or
irtues, as that God would cause us to ad-
ire his most excellent Nature and Perfe-
ions, to imitate him in what we are capable
nd ought, to resemble him, to *be perfect as*

our

our heavenly Father is perfect, but especially Holiness and Universal Beneficence, that may be *holy as he which hath called us is* That he would grant us to obey him sincerely, resolvedly, universally, that he would give us an obedient Heart, and consequently be universally holy, righteous and good, and practise all manner of Virtue, and especially in the hardest Lessons; when it is his Will we should undergo any Evils or afflictions, then presently to comply with his Will, and to submit ours to it, nay perfectly acquiesce in it, nay out of choice to make his Will to be ours. That also God would give unto us to trust in him, have Faith in him, and Dependence upon him, to believe whatsoever he teacheth us; willingly to make our Applications to him as our best Friend upon all Occasions; to acknowledge constantly that whatever inherent Strength or Ability in any kind we have, we have it from him; to be heartily thankful to him for all good things; to rejoyce in his Favour which cannot be had without Holiness, which when we have, we have all we can wish or desire in Effect, and we need not trouble our selves about any thing but keeping our selves in all dutiful Demeanour and Temper towards him, as the innocent and obedient Child of a loving Father.

Further still, In order to the obtaining

nd practiſing theſe and all other Virtues and races, we may put into our Prayers that od would beſtow upon us both natural arts and ſupervenient Gifts; That he would ake us knowing and wiſe, furniſh our under-andings with the Knowledge of many and f the moſt excellent things, eſpecially ſpiri-ual, and more eſpecially that he would di-ect us to the Knowledge of the Truth, and rue Goodneſs of things; That we might ot be fooliſhly led away with things that re falſe, erroneous, vain, trifling, ſwelling nd puffing up, and much pleaſing ſometimes or the preſent, but of little Profit to our elves or the World, which make us little ruitful in good Works to others, and con-equently the leaſt acceptable to God. Pray we that God would illuminate our Minds nd make us clearly to diſcern things, eſpe-ially ſpiritual things, ſuch as are Truth a id Goodneſs, the excellent and invaluable effi-cacy of Holineſs and all Virtue to make our Selves and the World happy, the Miſchie-vouſneſs and conſequently Unreaſonableneſs of Sin, and the real Contemptibleneſs of all other Qualities in compare with Holineſs, and that we might be affected accordingly; that is, that God would *ſpiritualize* our Un-derſtandings and Affections. Particularly that he would give us to apprehend and un-derſtand and conſider, there is the greateſt

ſincereſt

ſincereſt conſtanteſt Pleaſure and Satisfaction in a holy, virtuous, wiſe, and conſequent godly Life and Temper (that is, in Imitation of and Obedience to God:) much naturally eſpecially after much uſe, and we know more how much by the Influence of the Spirit of God; that this will give us great Confidence and Comfort in the Day of Death Boldneſs, Joy and Triumph in the Day of Judgment, when ſhall be ſeen ſo many trembling Knees and amazed Countenances of the haughtieſt Sinners, and finally, that it certainly fits us for and leads to a moſt perfect and happy Condition or State of Life hereafter. That God would give us, I ſay, often to think of, conſider, apprehend, be affected with and feel theſe and any other Motives to a holy Life.

Add we further, That God would beſtow upon us a ſober, conſiderative, adviſed, calm Mind, as a great preparation for Wiſdom and Virtue. Pray we, That God would inſtil into us the moſt generally uſeful and inſtrumental Graces of a moſt ingenuous impartial ſincere Love of the Truth, and more particularly a ſincere Love to Chriſtianity, as a Syſteme of the moſt certain and uſeful Doctrines. That we might believe moſt firmly and with a ſenſe of their Excellency, Sublimity, Nobleneſs, Delightfulneſs and Uſefulneſs, all the things that are therein taught

and

nd delivered; and moſt eſpecially thoſe concerning our Tempers, Lives and Actions; hat we may be hearty not ſuperficial Belie-vers. And in order to this that we may the more mind and love theſe things, Pray we hat we may have a very great Admiration of and Love to the excellent Qualities of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, his mighty mira-culous Power and high Favour with God, nay his being united ſo intimately to God or the Divine Nature, his great Wiſdom, his incomparable Holineſs and Goodneſs and Vir-tue in the higheſt degree; particularly that of his Charity, (and ſo of all other parti-cular Virtues) to us and all Mankind, his being ſo great a Benefactor to us as he hath been in revealing and confirming ſo many excellent, ſublime, noble and uſeful Truths and Doctrines to us; in going through the moſt calamitous Life and Death, to give us an Example of the moſt perfect Virtue and Holineſs, and thereby meriting and procu-ring for us the Remiſſion and free Pardon of all our Sins, or our *Juſtification* in caſe of true Repentance and Amendment; in his procu-ring for us Grace and Aſſiſtance to repent, amend and be converted, which is in ſome meaſure afforded to the worſt and the moſt negligent; Finally, in being the Author of Eternal Life to us by thus bringing us by his Grace and Merits to be good and to be par-

doned

doned, and consequenntly not to be unmeet to enter into a State of great Perfection and Happiness after Death and the final Judgment of all Flesh, of which he shall be the Judge and the Distributer.

After these may follow the things, which for the most part are useful and subservient while we are in this Life (and some of them proper thereto) to make and keep us good or make us better, or any way enable us to do more good, to execute our Goodness more immediately or remotely. Such as are long Life, especially till we come to be good, to be converted, to repent; that we may have the Experience of our own Sincerity and Strength in Goodness, be profitable to the World by our good Example, as we have been but too mischievous and hurtful, it may be, by our bad one, have the Joy and Comfort of this both in Life and Death, as also from a reasonable and just confidence and assurance of God's Love and Favour both here and hereafter.

Again, Health, Freedom from Sickness, Diseases, Distempers, especially those which may indispose and disable us from being wise and good (as many do) and which may incline us to what is weak, imperfect, bad, either immediately, or by the Use of Means for their removal.

Further, Peace, a State of good-will of all Men

Men towards us and towards one another, a good Government, good Laws, good Magiſtrates, good Neighbours, Power and Magiſtracy our ſelves, according to our Integrity and Ability to uſe it as well or better than others, which ſometimes our but allowable Modeſty and juſt Opinion of our ſelves, and eſpecially our well diſpoſedneſs to uſe it well, for the good of others, may permit us to deſire and oblige us not to refuſe. Add hereto Liberty, Honour, Good-Name or Reputation, to be beloved, Friends, Relations, Riches, and all the Conveniencies of Diet Cloathing, Habitation, Servants, Aſſiſtants, Attendants, Freedom from hurtful Care and Solicitude and Temptation about worldly things, juſt and ſober Recreations, which theſe Riches can and do uſe to procure. Theſe general things and many more numberleſs particulars may be the Matter and Contents of our Prayer to God that he would give and grant them us, and moſt what in this order; but let us be ſure that all be for the Ends and with thoſe Conſiderations expreſſed or preſumed that I have mentioned.

Behold then here a ſhort Scheme of the general Heads of moſt, at leaſt of thoſe things which we may have need of either at all times or ſome time or other; and which therefore may be the Matter of our Petitions and Deſires, when we pray or addreſs our

ſelves to God either ordinarily or extraordinarily.

And here it may be obſerved firſt, That all theſe things ſome or other of them may be put into our Petitions, for any other Perſons when we pray for them. For Example, We ought to pray for all the Univerſe, that God would make it perfect and happy, we may and ought particularly to pray as heartily for other Men as for our ſelves, that God would ſo diſpoſe the Affairs of Mankind as to make Men more *ſincerely*, *generouſly*, and *conſtantly* holy and good; That Men may more love and obey God their own and all the World's Maker and Benefactour, and imitate him more in the Univerſal Love of all, and right uſe of any Power or Ability they have derived from him. That Men may be more wiſe to underſtand and know the greateſt good they can do for themſelves and others, and the Ways how, and all things whatever which may enable them or help them thereto; That Men may more univerſally obtain all the Perfection and Happineſs their Nature is capable of, be more knowing, wiſe, prudent, holy, good, and in all inſtances virtuous; and in order hereto, that more Men may be Chriſtians, and Men which are ſo may be more ſo; That they may better underſtand the Doctrine and Contents of the Chriſtian Religion and their reſpective Goodneſs

neſs and Uſefulneſs, and attend to and be affected accordingly therewith, and therefore principally with its ultimate end and deſign, which is to make men holy and happy. That they may be free from Ignorance, Error, Superſtition (a moſt miſchievous ſort thereof) Formality, Hypocriſie, Pride, Tyranny, Affectation of Equality and Superiority, Contention, Strife, finally from all *ultimate ſelfiſhneſs*. That Chriſtians might be preſerved from being deluded or drawn or driven by fooliſh, ignorant, erroneous, proud, tyrannical, envious, vain-glorious, conceited, and ſelf-ſeeking men. Many good things there are alſo which may be proper to others, to their Conditions, or Circumſtances; as to all ſorts of Governours and Governed (that the one may rule well, and the other obey) to Magiſtrates and Subjects, Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Maſters and Servants. So alſo for whole Communities or Societies, ſome good things may be deſired which are proper to them, as Unity.

It is to be obſerved farther, That the matter of our Prayer or Petition may ſometimes be all or more fore-named particulars briefly mentioned only, and ſometimes, and that moſt commonly, but ſome of them enlarged. Thoſe particular things which we moſt want, which are moſt reaſonable, of whoſe goodneſs we are moſt ſenſible; theſe, I ſay, may

le more enlarged with variety of expreſſion both of ſenſe and affection to detain our attention longer and to raiſe our affections. We may alſo take notice of the incentives or motives to our deſire, ſuch as the goodneſs of God, his promiſes, the great goodneſs of the thing we deſire in many inſtances, the neceſſity, and yet the difficulty of it by reaſon of many hindrances: Inſomuch that one or very few particulars may be the matter of a very long Prayer.

Laſtly, We may obſerve, That the Petition for holineſs, and righteouſneſs, a virtuous and good mind is always expreſly to be made before all others, or elſe it is to be preſumed, that we already have it in ſuch degree, that we may uſe the thing well we ask for, if it be a thing may be uſed ill. For not only have we no reaſon to hope that our deſires ſhall be granted, but alſo we have reaſon to fear that we ſhall be puniſhed if we ask otherwiſe: it being either impudent boldneſs, or too wilful careleſneſs or ignorance of the nature of God ſo to do; as if he cared not what and to whom he gave good things. When Men ask amiſs that they may conſume it upon their luſts, no wonder that they aſk and receive not: *Jam.* 4. 3. *The ſacrifice of the wicked is abomination, how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind? Prov.* 21. 27. Nay, it may be here added, that ſo far as

man is wicked, though he ſhould pray for ſome things with a good mind, intending to uſe them well, ſo much leſs is the probability of his ſucceſs, or that God ſhould grant any thing at his requeſt. *For he that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, even his Prayers ſhall be an abomination. Prov.* 28. 9. *i.e.* ſo far forth and in ſuch proportion as a man is diſobedient to God and wicked, it is probable, God will reject and refuſe his Petitions.

But this hindreth not (to remove an ordinary ſcruple) but that he that hath more badneſs than goodneſs in him, and therefore in general may be called a bad man, may pray and deſire ſome things from God. For firſt he may in ſomethings at ſometimes, be well-minded, be a good man, and particularly in ſome of his Petitions, and therefore hath proportionable hopes of ſpeeding: But Secondly, there are other reaſons of praying to God beſides hopes of ſucceſs. There may be other, and ſo many good effects of our praying, that though we ſhould have little probability of receiving what we ask, yet it may be not only lawful but our duty to do it, rather than omit it: as the Acknowledgment of God, of our dependency upon him, the ſenſe of our wants, humility, the exerciſe of our charity, if our Prayers be for others, and the good example of all theſe to others, *&c.*

It is not ſurely unlawful for one that is more and much more generally bad than good, and therefore may be termed a wicked or bad man, to have good deſires, to pray to God to give him his grace to repent and be better (which he may be ſo well-diſpoſed at at ſome particular time as to do) and then his pardon for Chriſt's ſake, to pray for relief in his diſtreſs, deliverance from evils, competency of the good things of this World, God's bleſſing upon his endeavours, and all this that he may ſerve God comfortably, and do good: to pray for his Family or Children out of ſenſe of his duty and natural affection: to beſtow his bleſſing out of good nature, compaſſion, charity, gratitude upon the afflicted, his friends, his benefactors. Surely, I ſay, this is not unlawful, nay it is his duty: though at the time he doth thus he may in general be a bad man (yet in theſe his Prayers good) and ſo far it ſhould be probable that at leaſt ſome of theſe Petitions ſhould be rejected or not granted.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

SECT. I.

THE Fourth general Head of our Diſcourſe concerning Prayer, is the excellent effects, the advantages or benefits thereof. I mean of *praying* or *a Prayer*, not only of that one part of it called Petition. Theſe all are to be ſo many reaſons why we ought, and ſo many Motives to us to pray: for from the good effects of any action, are all the reaſons and motives for its performance to be taken.

Theſe Benefits may be of two general ſorts, *viz.* (1.) To others, (2.) To our ſelves.

1. By our Prayers we may do good to others. For it may oft-times ſeem reaſonable and juſt to God to beſtow upon others what we ask and deſire as we ought for them, upon the condition of our Prayers: ſo that if we had not prayed, God might not have given it. For this his hearing our Prayers for others may as reaſonably be an Inſtance of God's Goodneſs and Benevolence to us as any other good thing, and it may be as great an Engagement to us to love and thank God;

and as a Reward it may engage us more to acknowledge and depend upon himſelf (which are ſuch excellent Means of making us good) and to proceed to love others, and to rejoyce in others good. Beſides, if we be generally very good Men, this inſtance of God's Favour to us in hearing our Prayers for others, will very much engage and encourage others to an Imitation of us, and to be good likewiſe, that they may have the ſame Favour and Honour from God too. For a great Honour ſure it is, and a great ſign of our being acceptable to him, when he is pleaſed to grant our Petitions, not only for our ſelves, but for others likewiſe, for whom, out of Love, Charity and Compaſſion we heartily pray.

It is true, God beſtows upon us the great Favour of granting our Petitions, or hearing our Prayers for our ſelves, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake: but it is upon the Condition of *our being holy and good.* Upon this *ſame Condition*, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, he may and doth do us that particular Favour of hearing our Prayers for others likewiſe; that he may ſhew and declare how acceptable to him Holineſs and Goodneſs is. And it was our Saviour's conſtant ſpotleſs and perfect Holineſs, that merited from God the Pardon of all our Sins, in caſe of Repentance, for his ſake, and conſequently all his Favours, and particularly the hear-

hearing of all our Prayers both for our ſelves and others. By which we may eaſily underſtand how God may hear our Prayers for one another, and that for Chriſt's ſake.

We have ſtore of Examples and Commands in Scripture for all Men, eſpecially good Men, to pray for others: we have alſo there promiſes that they ſhall be heard, and performances too, that is, the ſucceſs recorded.

God commandeth *Job*'s Friends to go to *Job* to pray for them, with their burnt Offerings, that God would forgive their raſh and unadviſed Speech concerning himſelf, out of Envy, Contempt or ill-Will againſt *Job*, it is likely: and tells them, that he would accept his Servant *Job*. Here God even forgives ſome ſins of ſome few Friends, or rather omits *ſome* Puniſhment for them, upon Condition of *Job*'s Prayer, and for his ſake; *Job* 42. *Verſe* 7, 8, 9.

A great part of the Puniſhment of the Children of *Iſrael* for their ſottiſh Idolatry in worſhipping the *golden Calf* ſo ſoon after their coming out of *Egypt*, ſeems to have been forgiven upon *Moſes* his Interceſſion and Prayer. For it is ſaid, that God threatned to conſume them, and to make of *Moſes* a great Nation: but upon *Moſes*'s beſeeching the Lord, that he repented him of the Evil that he thought to do unto his People. I ſay, God forgave a great part of their Puniſhment,

ment, not all: he did not utterly deſtroy or conſume them: though he did plague the People too, becauſe they made the Calf. And this after he had prayed to God to forgive them their Sin, or to blot him out of his Book; that is, not to mind him, nor be favourable unto him, nor to ſhew any kindneſs to him, as Men uſe to do to thoſe whom they have once written down, to remember to do them ſome good as occaſion ſhall offer, but afterwards blot them out again. We may read theſe things, *Exod.* 32. from *Verſe* the 10th, to the 15th, and from *Verſe* 30 to the end of the Chapter. And ſo again upon *Moſes*'s Prayer to pardon the Iniquity of the *Iſraelites* when they murmured againſt him, were ſeditious and conſpiring to chuſe a Captain, under whoſe Conduct they might return to *Egypt* again, God ſaith, that he had pardoned according to his *Word*, that is, his *Prayer* which he had made. *Numb.* 14. *Ver.* 20. See what great good things it may ſeem juſt and reaſonable to God to beſtow and give upon the Prayer of one eminently holy and righteous Man (and how much greater for the ſake of one who was perfectly ſo) even ſaving the Lives of thouſands, of whole Nations, and all the Bleſſings conſequent. And therefore it hath not been untruly, however vainly and conceitedly it might have been ſaid by ſome, that in this reſpect as well as

others,

others, the World fares much the better for holy and good Men, and even thoſe who are their Enemies, who malign or hate them; to whom they can and do often do good thus againſt their Wills, when bad Men would not be beholden to good Men, yet they pray for good things to them, and wiſh them well. They often pray to God to make them good, to amend them, and even while they are bad to forbear them, and not to puniſh them, either by laying evil things, or taking away good things from them, whilſt bad Men out of a malicious or revengeful Spirit, wiſh and rejoyce in the miſchief of good Men their greateſt Benefactors and of one another.

Finally, Good Men (ſo far as ſuch) always wiſh and pray in general for good things to all Men, even their Enemies and bad Men, and to every particular perſon all particular good things, until they ſee it is inconſiſtent with a greater good in the World ſomewhere elſe.

They always wiſh heartily every man to be better, and then Knowledge, Health, Riches, Good-Name, Friends, what you will, until they manifeſtly ſee they are ſo fooliſh or bad, as to do more hurt than good therewith, both to themſelves and others; and then their univerſal Charity to the World obligeth them to refrain from their good Wiſhes

and

and Prayers for them; they are not then capable of them, and yet they retain ſtill ſo much good-Will and Charity to them in particular, as that they would always be glad to ſee them capable, ſo as they might pray for and endeavour their good in all things. Thus for example, a good Man cannot pray for another to be rich, when he manifeſtly ſees he will and doth uſe what he hath to Intemperance, Luxury, Wantonneſs, Pride, Oppreſſion, Miſchievouſneſs, and thereby to corrupt, vex or make miſerable the Place where he lives, or the Perſons he can reach; but yet he with all his Heart prays, that he might become ſo ſober, adviſed, pious, and charitable, that all theſe things may be his Portion too, though the former be better than them all.

And, I ſay, many a time upon the ſincerely charitable and fervent Prayer of a good Man, do other Men both good and bad, receive both ſpiritual and bodily Bleſſings, and it may be eſpecially in a place where the Prayer and the anſwer of it may be more remarkable or obſervable, as in a Town or Family; and this to ſhew how acceptable to God is ſincere and unaffected Holineſs, and particularly a hearty praying for others out of Charity; and conſequently to encourage both the good Man himſelf to Perſeverance, and others to Imitation. Although the good

Man

Man is far from making the Satisfaction he hath in his Goodneſs and his conſequent Favour with God, his only or laſt End; but principally at the ſame time he regards too his pleaſing God and good done to others, for which God is pleaſed to make him an Inſtrument.

And here let us be ſure we are good and ſincerely holy Men, if we will have this Priviledge with God and Favour from him; not only preſume and fancy our ſelves to be ſo, and vindicate our ſelves for ſuch, meerly for ſome things which may be done by really bad Men and ſecret Hypocrites. Then we are ſuch and ſo far forth as we do things out of a ſincere Conſcience, that is, out of a ſincere *Judgment* and *Deſire* to do the thing that is *right*, and therefore with a cautious and modeſt Deſire of knowing the Truth concerning what is right, our Duty or what we ought to do; and when the Principles of our Conſciences, or that with which they are informed, or that which influenceth our Judgments concerning our Duty (for they may be corrupted) are a ſincere Love to God that we might pleaſe him, and a univerſal Charity, ſuch as I have juſt now mentioned; when we deſire to know our Duty that we may pleaſe God, and more certainly be directed to do more good. We are far from this temper of ſincere Holineſs when we are puffed

puffed up, conceited and hugely pleaſed *ultimately* with our ſelves, that we are the People ſo highly in the Favour of God, and have ſo great a Priviledge and Power with him, as to call down Bleſſings preſently, not only for our ſelves, but for others, and Curſes too perhaps, if we pleaſe. A good Man is not thus affected at all, but deſpiſes and hates any ſuch Temper of Mind when he finds himſelf tempted to it.

Further, If we modeſtly take notice at any time, that God hath been pleaſed to grant us ſuch a Priviledge becauſe truly good, we are to be adviſed to call to Mind, who it is that hath made us ſo: To attribute and aſcribe humbly all the Goodneſs we have, and the Favour of honouring and rewarding it ſo, to his own free though eternal and immutable Goodneſs and Benignity of Nature: That we and all we can do, and do do, are mediately or immediately from him, and depend upon him as the Cauſe: that without him we neither are nor can do any thing. For whatſoever Ability, Strength, Liberty we can truly pretend to, it is from him, and dependent upon him, and could never have been nor now be without him. Thus ought we modeſtly and truly to think of our ſelves (and ſo far as we do not it is from Pride, and we are bad Men.) And conſequently to be accordingly affected with Contempt, or undervaluing

dervaluing of our ſelves utterly in compare with God in this reſpect, when God is pleaſed ſo highly to favour us, and to grant us ſo noble a Priviledge as to make us holy and good, and then to be as it were the effectual and ſucceſsful Mediators and Procurers of Bleſſings and good things for others: not to arrogate and aſſume falſly to our ſelves the being in the leaſt the *ultimate* or *principal* Cauſe thereof, with a Forgetfulneſs and Neglect of God, and conſequently without all reaſon, ſtrutting and being puffed up and big with our ſelves; being pleaſed *ultimately* in the Poſſeſſion of ſuch a Power and Priviledge, as if it were really from our ſelves; in which, if we were humbly and not proudly diſpoſed, we ſhould not be ſo careleſly ignorant or miſtaken. Nay, let me ſay, if it were poſſible (as it is not) to have any ſuch Priviledge or Power from any thing in our ſelves independent upon God (as ſuppoſe the good uſe of our liberty,) yet if we pleaſed our ſelves only in the Poſſeſſion, Uſe or Effect of it to our ſelves, and not in the good and benefit of others procured thereby; we are ſo far forth not good Men. And therefore whatever we may fancy our ſelves, we are not the Perſons, unleſs we be ſomewhere better, whoſe Prayers are ſo acceptable and ſucceſsful with God, nor have we ſo much Power with him. Nay, if we be thus proudly and vainly affected, though

though we pray, we take a moſt likely Courſe to have our Prayers denied, and when we think beſt of our ſelves, but falſly and proudly, we do the leaſt. It is a great Honour and Priviledge, and therefore Men but of pretended and ordinary Sanctity are apt to catch at it, and arrogate to themſelves a great degree of ſincere Goodneſs, that they may ſeem with Reaſon ſo to do.

This Honour and Priviledge of righteous holy Men is expreſly affirmed by St. *James*, and proved by an Example, and upon it is founded an Exhortation or Command for ſick Perſons to apply themſelves to the Elders of the Church, that is, the Governour or Governours of each particular Church to pray for them, and they ſhould be ſaved or healed, the Lord ſhould raiſe them up: and if they had committed ſins, they ſhould be forgiven them. That is moſt likely that Puniſhment of their ſins; *viz.* their ſickneſs which might be inflicted, and juſtly continued too, ſhould be removed and taken away. *James* 5. *Verſe* 14. *Is any ſick amongſt you? let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord.* That is not improbably, let the Elders uſing the natural Means for his Recovery alſo add their fervent Prayers to God. For anointing with Oyl was a moſt ordinary and uſual Medicine in thoſe Times and Countries

for

for curing many Infirmities and Diſeaſes, as appears by the *Jewiſh* Writings. And therefore it may be inſtanced in by St. *James*, and put Synecdochically for any other natural Means or Medicine whatſoever applied for Help and Cure. To this alſo the *Jews* added Enchantments, to which the Apoſtle probably oppoſeth Prayer, as the Diſciples uſed the Invocation of the Name of *Jeſus* and *God*, as a learned Man hath obſerved. And then the Apoſtle proceeds, *the Prayer of Faith*, that is, of a Believer, or of a true and hearty holy Chriſtian (ſuch as the Elders were generally and reaſonably then ſuppoſed to be) *ſhall ſave the ſick*; that is, ſhall ſave him from his ſickneſs, or deliver him, *and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up. And if he have committed ſins*, that is, any ſins which might particularly have deſerved ſuch a Puniſhment as Sickneſs; yet by the Prayers of theſe Elders, righteous Men, *they ſhall be forgiven him*, that is, this Puniſhment ſhall not be further inflicted upon him. And then follows, *confeſs your Faults one to another, and pray one for another*, for the *effectual fervent Prayer of the righteous Man availeth much*: it is very prevalent with God to procure ſuch and other Favours and Bleſſings, yea, and ſometimes Curſes and Evil things; even as *Elias*, who being but a Man as we are, by his Prayers procured and obtained from God both Drought and Rain.

There may be also other Benefits to others by our Prayers, if they be duly performed: they may be Examples to others, excite and draw them to a due Acknowledgment of of God and his Perfections, to love him, thank him, desire of him, have Faith, Confidence and Trust in him, obey and please him, and to obtain all the consequent good Effects which we our selves shall by our own Prayers; all which good things, had it not been for our Example, they would never have thought of or minded, or not so much.

SECT. I.

BUt Secondly, There are many and great Benefits *to our selves* by Prayer, which again may be comprehended under three Heads.

(1) Our Goodness or Holiness.

(2) Our Comfort, Joy, Satisfaction, Pleasure and Delight of Soul.

(3) Some things that may be the common Causes or Means of both.

(1) Prayers do confirm and increase our Goodness. They tend much to preserve us therein,

therein, and to make us better, and that these several ways amongst others.

First, By the actual Exercise and Use of it, or of the immediate Means thereof.

Secondly, By suggestion or bringing to mind our Duty, or what helps to practise it.

Thirdly, By being an Occasion of Imitation of God.

Fourthly, By putting us in mind particularly of the Condition of our receiving all other good things besides Goodness, nay of our receiving a further degree of Goodness it self.

Fifthly, By way of Remuneration or Reward. All which I shall a little more explicate.

(1) By being an Occasion of the actual Exercise and Use of Goodness, or of those things which immediately are the most frequent and effectual Means thereof. And this is easily understood by running over all the Parts of a Prayer we have formerly mentioned: As,

First, The Confession of our Sins, that is, an express Judgment concerning our selves directed to God, that we have been guilty formerly, or are still of such and such sins, and a hearty Disapprobation, Dislike, Disal-

allowance thereof, a Contempt or Hatred of them, and of our ſelves too ſo far as we have been guilty, a hearty ſorrow that we have ever been ſo imperfect, wicked or unhappy, and a chearful, free and firm Reſolution to do ſo no more, but to be good, and to do our Duty, to do what we have been faulty in omitting, and to abſtain from and abandon what we have been guilty of in doing; to mortifie and extinguiſh all the *Inordinacy* and *Immoderacy* of any or all our Appetites, that is, all our Luſts or the Corruption of our Appetites, and to excite and quicken our Deſire and Love to our Duty, and to Obedience to God, whoſe Commands are the Rule of it.

Now Confeſſion of our Sins thus explicated, and in this ſenſe is an actual Exerciſe or Exertion of the Habit of Goodneſs and Holineſs or of Grace in us, as it is uſually called; ſo often as we thus pray we ſtir up and excite and put forth into Action our habitual inclination of Goodneſs and Holineſs: But every Action and Exerciſe confirms the Habit to which it belongs, ſtrengthens and increaſeth it. All Habits may be thus gotten, and however gotten (though immediately by God's Influence, which is called Infuſion) yet they are thus maintained, ſtrengthened and increaſed. The moſt ordinary Perſon may underſtand this by Experience. The more often

ten we actually hate or are grieved for or at any thing or Perſon, the more we are inclined ſo to do; inſomuch that at laſt we may not endure the very ſight or mentioning of them. And ſo it is in Love: what things we have accuſtomed our ſelves and uſed often to love, we contract a moſt ready, firm and conſtant Inclination ſo to do; inſomuch that ſometimes we cannot be for any time without them. In the very like manner it is when we actually often abominate Sin in general, or any one in particular, when we hate, contemn, are grieved for it; when we heartily love our Duty, and with the whole ſtrength of our Souls deſire and will we may be univerſally or in any particular innocent or good: we ſhall at laſt arrive to that habitual Temper of Love of Goodneſs and our Duty, and hatred of Sin, which will be eaſie, ſtrong, vigorous and conſtant, and ſhall not endure the Sight or Suſpition of any Sin in our ſelves, nor be able to live comfortably without the conſtant conſciouſneſs to our ſelves of as great a degree of Innocency and Virtue as we can by any Means attain to.

Profeſſion of our future Obedience (which was another Ingredient in Prayer) as I have explicated Confeſſion, is included in it, and is nothing but an expreſs Action or Reſolution of Will excited by the Soul, and directed

to God to be obedient to him in general or in any particular where ſhe hath been faulty, and that now by his Aſſiſtance and Strength which ſhe humbly implores, ſhe will obſerve to do her Duty, the Rules of which are his Will made known by Reaſon or Revelation. Which expreſs Action of hers, or actual Reſolution (and the more frequent the better) muſt needs preſerve and increaſe her habitual Temper or Inclination. Prayer therefore thus performed by a rightly informed diſcreet and knowing Soul according to its Fervency and Frequency hath a moſt natural Influence to preſerve and ſtrengthen us, to make us grow in all Goodneſs; And the neglect of it may reaſonably very often (not always, becauſe there are other Means) be the Cauſe of Perſons declining and growing more cold and indifferent in all their Duty.

I do not ſay that all Prayer is a neceſſary Means of Mens growth in Goodneſs; nor are we preſently to expect ſuch mighty difference between all thoſe who pray and thoſe who do not. And then upon any diſappointment, by the miſcarriages of ſome who uſe it, gladly take occaſion to reproach or deſpiſe the Duty, as a uſeleſs but troubleſome thing, as ſome naughty men are apt to do. For men may perform it very erroneouſly, idly and careleſly. And then they may ſo engage

engage their Affections with that Concern and Conſtancy to other Objects in the World after they have done their Prayer, that they may quite forget it, or drown and overcome the good Senſe and Affections they had therein. Whence their Prayers are but little effectual.

From all theſe Cauſes it often comes to paſs that you may ſee thoſe that are not negligent in this Duty or Performance, but frequent and conſtant and long too, ſo bad in their Tempers, Lives and Actions all the Day, that you can ſee little Difference between them and thoſe who do not pray at all. Little I ſay, for I am apt to think there is ſome general good, uſually by the meaneſt performance of it, and Men who are bad would otherwiſe *generally* be much worſe; and therefore though Men ſeem to be very little the better for their Prayers, I would not have them to leave them quite off for all that.

As for Acknowledgment of God's excellent Perfections, his infinite Power, Wiſdom, Univerſal Goodneſs, his Bounty, Mercy, Juſtice, *&c.* which is another Ingredient in a Prayer. It is manifeſt, That the oftner we do this the more Spiritual our Minds are; and we ſee that by Exerciſe and Uſe we apprehend and conceive theſe ſpiritual things more ſtrongly and clearly, and our Affections too of Honour, Admiration, Reverence,

Fair, Faith, Hope, Joy in God, and Love to him grow more ſubſtantial and real, more ſtrong and vigorous, not ſo faint and languid, ſo that we feel them in our Breaſts as really and as powerfully as to any other Object; we come to have a real Underſtanding, Perception, Senſe and Affection for thoſe things when they are named; we know and feel them in our Minds and Hearts; we know what it is, and have it as really in our ſelves to honour, fear and love God for his infinite Perfections, though inviſible as a Prince attended with all his Enſigns of Majeſty and Greatneſs, and whom we know to be as wiſe and good as great.

By our frequent Converſe thus of our Minds with God, he becomes readily a very real thing to us, is really perceived by us, and hath real Influence upon our Affections: whereas before we thus begun to uſe our ſelves, the Name of God and of all his Attributes and Perfections was an inſignificant thing to us, we underſtood little or nothing by it, and no more affected with it moſt times than our Statues of Wood or Stone would be. We might hear much talk, and read much of God indeed, or his excellent Nature and Attributes, but little know what they meant. We apprehended better and more, were much more affected with ſome little particular kindneſs of any honeſt or

good

good Neighbour, than with the infinite Bounty and Goodneſs of God, who is the conſtant Cauſe and Author to us, and to all things of all the good things we all have and enjoy.

Moreover in ſome Prayers, as ſecret Prayers, where we may have time to apply our Thoughts to what we pleaſe, we do not only tranſiently (which if frequent will do a great deal) but alſo fixedly and for a longer time attend ſometimes to one or more of theſe infinite Perfections of God when we acknowledge them; whence a more particular diſcovery and clear apprehenſion of the Greatneſs thereof; inſomuch that the Soul may break forth into Raptures of ſutable Paſſions, that is, great and ſudden Violences thereof. As for Example, If a Man contemplating the Power of God ſhould attend to the Greatneſs and Vaſtneſs, Excellency and Nobleneſs, and Strangeneſs of the Nature of things he hath made, were it but only of the indefinitely extended material World, much more of the intellectual or the World of Spirits. Or contemplating his Wiſdom ſhould attend to this, that all things that we and all the rational Creatures in Heaven and Earth know by little Parcels, and ſucceſſively to Eternity it ſelf, are all preſent at once to that infinite Underſtanding; or contemplating his Goodneſs, ſhould take notice of the Freedome

dome of it, he being infinitely powerful, th
Immutability of it, the Universality, a
that all the greatest Evils that so seem to u
are permitted or appointed out of Goodne
and the least of things, and most minu
disposed by the same Goodness the best w
that can be; or should take notice of so
one or more excellent Instances thereof,
his free and ready pardoning upon Repe
tance the sottish Heedlesness, and sometime
the malicious Rebellion and insolent Co
tempt of his own pitiful Creatures again
him: I say a Man contemplating these Perf
ctions thus and attending to some such thin
therein, will more strongly apprehend them
and sometimes be affected and seized wi
the greatest Violence and Raptures of suitab
Passions. Such as we often meet withal i
the *Psalms*, when *David* in his Acknowledge
ment of God glanced at and discovered or fo
more steadily and clearly his Wisdom, Powe
Mercy, Goodness, Righteousness in some In
stances or Effects. As in *Psalm* 36. *Verse* 5
*Thy Mercy, O Lord, is in the Heavens, and thy
Faithfulness reacheth unto the Clouds*; (That is
thy Mercy and Goodness, particularly expre
sing it self in thy faithful performing thy Pro
mises, is every where, and in all thy Crea
tion manifesteth it self) *thy Righteousness is
like the great Mountains*; (That is again, th
Universal Goodness is vast as to Extension, and
unmove-

unmoveable and unchangeable as to Duration; For ſo are the Mountains, as far as we obſerve, compared with other things) *thy Judgments are a great Deep*; (The infinite Decrees and Reſolutions of thy Will few of them known, and all done with an incomprehenſible Wiſdom and Knowledge.) *O Lord thou preſerveſt Man and Beaſt*; (All Creatures are maintained by thee.) Then upon this Contemplation and Reflection, he breaks forth in the next *Verſe*; *O how exeellent and precious is thy Loving-kindneſs! therefore the Children of Men ſhall put their truſt in the ſhadow of thy wings.*

Now the real, clear, ſtrong and vigorous Apprehenſion of, and Affections towards theſe divine Attributes, or this excellent Nature of God, do more powerfully diſpoſe our Minds to Imitation of and Obedience to God, and conſequently to Univerſal Righteouſneſs and Holineſs.

And ſo likewiſe be it obſerved of thanking God, or actually loving him for his Benefits received already, either in general or in particular, which is alſo one Ingredient in Prayer; without doubt the oftner we do it, the more really and heartily, the more vigorouſly and ſtrongly we ſhall do it: But the Love of God for his Benefits doth diſpoſe us certainly to pleaſe him, and conſequently to imitate and obey him (we knowing that pleaſeth

pleaſeth him) and conſequently to be uni
ſally holy, righteous and good, which he
and commands. Nay, we all naturally kn
that Holineſs pleaſeth him, beſides wha
perpetually ſounded in our Ears, who
Chriſtians from our Cradles, that *without H*
lineſs it is impoſſible to pleaſe God. And ſo
ſee it by Experience, that bad Men care
for thanking of God, or if they do, it is
ry ſuperficially and coldly and very ſeldom
and contrariwiſe, thoſe that do it oftner
more heartily are generally better. *Da*
very frequently in the *Pſalms* joins both
Thankfulneſs to God for his Mercies and
nefits received and his Deſire and Prayers
God to beſtow them, with his Reſoluti
to be obedient to God and to keep his Co
mandments. In the 119. *Pſalm* often, *Th*
art good and doeſt good, teach me thy Statu
Verſe 68. *And hold thou me up and I ſhall*
ſafe, and I will have reſpect unto thy Commi
ments continually. Verſe 117. *And deliver*
from the Oppreſſion of Man, ſo will I keep
Precepts. Verſe 134. *I cryed unto thee, ſave*
and I ſhall keep thy Teſtimonies. Verſe 146.

In Petition too another Ingredient of Pra
er, the oftner we do it, the readier we ſha
be thereto, and our Deſires will be more rea
ſincere, ſtrong and vigorous: but if we truly
and heartily, not in Words only, deſire an
thing of God, we muſt have ſome hope be
wil

ill do it; and if ſo, we muſt certainly judge im to be good, which will engage us to love im, and conſequently (as even now argu-d) diſpoſe us to pleaſe him by imitating and beying him.

I have ſaid before, that Prayers are not eceſſary Means for making us better. For rſt, there are other Means beſides, as Read-ng, Hearing, Meditating, in which are many f the ſame Employments of Mind, as there re in Prayer.

And then again, A Man's Opinion of *Per-fection* and the ſeveral Degrees thereof, and onſequently of God, whom all men judge to e *all Perfection*, of the Goodneſs and Bad-neſs of Things and their ſeveral Degrees, nay be ſo falſe and miſchievous, that his Ac-knowledgments, Honour, Reverence, Love o God, his Confeſſions of his Sins, his Thankſgivings, and Petitions in his Prayers may be very pernicious things, and inſtead of making him more truly holy and virtuous, charitable, ſelf-denying, humble, ſpiritual, may make him very wicked and bad, ſelfiſh, tyrannical, proud and ſenſual; and this it may be ſometimes when he thinks clean con-trary, and is very highly conceited of him-ſelf through Inſincerity, his Conſcience be-ing prejudiced and defiled, by ſome habitual Luſt wilfully or lazily indulged; It is not pure and ſincere, inclined to judge by no other

other Appetite but what is *right* and *ought* to be done. Thus a Man may have in his Acknowledgments of God many falſe and baſe Conceits and Opinions of him: as that he is arbitrary, doth all things out of meer ſelf-love, only to pleaſe himſelf, and therefore no matter whether in Eternal Torment or Happineſs of Creatures; that he is partial, that he connives at and is indulgent to ſome particular ones in Sin, only becauſe he will, and they are dear to him, and he hath ſet his affections upon them, and that he will forgive ſome for Chriſt's ſake, and pardon them, but not others, though one be not better than the other. Men may go ſo far in this blind Devotion, through their own Careleſneſs, Raſhneſs, or Luſts, as to Worſhip more an Idol of their own, or the Devil, than God: That is, the Object of their Worſhip in their Minds may have more of what they imagine to be *Perfection*, and conſequently to belong to the Nature of God, than of what truly and really is ſo: It may have more of *Imperfection*, and ſometimes of the worſt ſort, than of what is true *Perfection*. And thus it is in thoſe who conceive God ſelfiſh, partial, malicious, tyrannical, revengeful, corporeal; who aſſuredly are a greater number than are commonly thought, and ſome eſteemed very devout.

Men may alſo pray for ſome things out of

meer

ater Self-Love, nay with a Mixture of Vain-Glory, Hatred, Envy, Revenge, Worldly-Mindedneſs, Senſuality, Pride and Wrath againſt others. A Mixture, I ſay, for the moſt part, for they may alſo propoſe to themſelves the Juſtice of their Deſires, and what pleaſeth God, and is for his Honour. Though this Apprehenſion or Conceit too may oft-times proceed from *ultimate Self-Love*, and they are willing to think a Thing juſt, and that it pleaſeth God, only becauſe they would have it ſo. For ſuch Prayers as theſe, as there may be ſomething in them which may have ſome Tendency to make Men good (as meerly acknowledging of God's Attributes and our Dependence upon him) ſo there is much more in them which will make Men bad and wicked.

Again, A Man may be erroneous and miſtaken in many Parts of his Prayer through Pride and Conceitedneſs or Superſtition. So he may acknowledge God's goodneſs, and thank him for his being made by him very holy and good in general, when he is not ſo; nay, ſometimes not even in thoſe particulars he mentions; and that which he takes for Holineſs may be done out of Pride, Vain-Glory, or ſome other baſe End. As the Phariſee thanked God he was not an Extortioner and unjuſt, when he was, though not in the ſame Inſtances with the Publican, in exacting

acting Custom, and taking perhaps some what to abate and conceal it; or when, he was not an Extortioner, Unjust, Adulterer in the external Actions, or internal either; yet it might be only to save his Credit or Reputation, or that he might appear more holy than the Publican, and not be as the Common People of the Earth, but be superiour to them: In all which there was no Holiness at all, but only Wickedness: Or finally, if he were truly so much better than the Publican in these things; yet he might be as bad or worse in as many or more things, such as were Pride, Vain-Glory, Envy, &c. and that therefore he looked upon himself much more holy in *general*, than he was, and thanked God for it too.

And so also a Man might be erroneous in his Confession of his Sins, and through indulged Weakness, Ignorance, Superstition, or some Passions, judge those Sins, which are not so, or greater than they are. For which Reasons how necessary is it for us to be wise, discreet, to know our Selves to be in the Truth before we suffer any Affections to be engaged. Some even Religious and highly useful affections when guided by reason and truth, may when they are blind or not directed thereby, lead us into sometimes hurtful errors and mistakes, and dispose our Judgments to Judge falsly. A very great

hatred

hatred, contempt and grief at our ſelves for ſin in general, or ſome more notorious ſin in particular may make us judge worſe of our ſelves than in truth we deſerve: as we but too often do by others, when we are poſſeſſed with the paſſions of Hatred, Anger, Revenge againſt them. And becauſe it is very rare but that through ſelf-love and flattery we err on the other hand, therefore this is the leſs ſuſpected. So ſometimes ſome very great paſſion of admiration, honour, love, *&c.* for ſome one attribute in God, and a deſire to magnifie it, may make men judge that to be in God which is inconſiſtent with ſome other attribute or perfection in him, and aſcribe to him not only bare falſities, but myſterious contradictions. So, for Example, a man's deſire to advance the unlimitedneſs of God's power may lead him to judge, that he may juſtly, if he will, make all his Creatures to be miſerable. And ſo ſome piouſly, but unwarily, to magnifie the mercy of God in our Redemption, have ſpoken, and ſeemed to think, that God or the Divine Nature it ſelf did really even leſſen and abate it ſelf when for the recovery of miſerable Man-kind, it did extraordinarily and Hypoſtatically unite it ſelf to an humane nature. But this is a little Digreſſion.

Again, A Man may pray Words only, and have no ſenſe hardly of what he ſaith; and

yet this is uſed to be called Prayer, though according to our Definition it is not. A Man may alſo pray and underſtand what he ſaith, but yet have no Affection ſtirring, no Admiration, Honour, Reverence, Love, Thankfulneſs to God, no Deſires for the things which he mentions with his Lips or conceives with his Mind, no Truſt or Faith in God, nor one jot of inward Sorrow and true Grief for his Sins, as Sins, or Reſolution to do ſo no more, but to abſtain from them and to forſake them, and to be obedient to God for the future: I ſay a Man may ſay Words and underſtand Senſe, and both very excellent too, and yet have none of theſe Paſſions and Affections excited, he may not be touched therewith, but be perfectly cold. And yet theſe are uſually called Prayers; which as it is true they have ſome Tendency and Preparation to do ſome good (even the very imprinting ſuch Words and Senſes in our Memory;) ſo they may ſometimes do as much or more harm; and ſo either not make us any whit the better, or make us the worſe. For they may by uſe make us formal, that is to ſay Words without either Senſe or Underſtanding, or with *them*, but without any Affection at all; more to disjoyn thoſe things which otherwiſe would be more naturally conjoyn'd, and to be well content herewith too, and think we have done well enough,

and

and make us look no further. If we have but after any manner ſaid our Prayers, though never ſo ignorantly and coldly, we have done our Duty, we are well ſatisfied. And the oftner we uſe our ſelves to be thus content and to ſatisfie our Conſcience, the eaſiler we ſhall do it ſtill; whereas we ought all of us when we pray to heed, underſtand, and comprehend to the utmoſt of our Power and Ability what it is we ſay, and eſpecially its Truth and Goodneſs, and then to ſtir up and ſtrengthen our ſutable Affections; and if we find our ſelves dull, languid, inapprehenſive, to ſend up to God a hearty Ejaculation, that he would by his Spirit illuminate our Underſtandings, quicken, enliven and ſtrengthen our Affections and Reſolutions.

Again, as I have formerly ſaid, Though we pray daily, and it may be indifferently well, with Underſtanding and Affection; yet we may ſo conſtantly both *inordinately and immoderately* engage our Affections all the day after about other Objects beſides our Duty, and thoſe things which diſpoſe us to the Practice thereof, without any Reference of them to their due End, and without any Government or Moderation, that the Effect of our Prayer may be ſometimes quite prevented or extinguiſhed, and our Affections be upon other things, and our Inclinations to them as unduely as ever they were. Indeed

generally and for the moſt part, I think that our Prayers being performed with underſtanding and affection, have ſome tendency in them to make us better, or keep us from being worſe. We ſhould generally be worſe, (though now not good) if ſuch our Prayers ſhould be altogether neglected.

Finally, It is poſſible ſometimes for our Prayers to be ſo performed, as that they may many other wayes beſides that which was a little before mentioned, do us more harm than good, and render us worſe than if we prayed not at all. As if we be ſo vainly conceited of our Prayers, and of our ſelves for them, as to think our ſelves very good and acceptable to God, let our Lives and Actions be all the day after what they will; and that our Prayers make ſatisfaction for our Sins; and particularly, that it is attainment enough whiningly to confeſs them in general or particular Terms, and to acknowledge our Weakneſs and Badneſs of our Hearts, and ſo to be very well content to be alwayes weak and ſinful too; and think it far better to pray and not to live well and conſcientiouſly in the moſt conſiderable and frequent Actions of Life, than to live conſcientiouſly, righteouſly and honeſtly, and that with reſpect to God too, as pleaſing him; but not to pray, though very erroneouſly, and indiſcreetly, nay, inſincerely and hypocritically

critically (as is before ſaid) and therefore wickedly; Whereas this laſt is a Means to the former, and in it doth its chief and principal, though not only Uſe and Benefit conſiſt, as we ſhall hereafter mention.

But yet, by no Means would I, becauſe of this or ſuch like ineffectual Uſe or Abuſes which may be of Prayer, have Men think of neglecting or throwing it quite away; but rather to betake themſelves ſeriouſly to uſe and perform it as they ought, and to have a Care of all Formality, Conceitedneſs, falſe Opinion of Prayers, and to be careful to follow them with their conſtant Care, Diligence, Watchfulneſs, endeavour to live according to them, or according to all good Conſcience all the day after, in all their Actions; finally, to perform them according to the Directions hereafter.

This for the firſt way how our Prayers tend to make us better, and to preſerve us ſtill in what Goodneſs we have obtained, that we do not go backward and relapſe, but go forward and make progreſs in Goodneſs; *(viz.)* by being an occaſion of the actual Exerciſe thereof, or of thoſe things which are very proper Means for that End.

SECT. III.

II. OUr Praying will preſerve us in goodneſs, and make us better by Suggeſtion. That is, by bringing to our Minds either our Duty in general, or any particular Duties to God, our Neighbour, or our Selves, or thoſe things which are Means to diſpoſe and engage us thereto. Such as are the infinite Wiſdom of God, his all-ſeeing and comprehending Knowledge, that he is the ſearcher of Hearts, and knows perfectly and better than our ſelves the beſt and worſt of our Thoughts, Counſels, Deſigns, Tendencies, Inclinations, Choices, and Delights of our Hearts: He knows both our Honeſty, Simplicity and Sincerity, and alſo our Partiality, Hypocriſie and ſecret Badneſs not known or perceived by others at all, nor by our ſelves, perhaps, till we be of an adviſed, calm, humble, modeſt and ſincere Temper: ſuch are further the Univerſal Goodneſs of God, his particular Mercy or Bounty, his Juſtice and Severity, our Dependence upon God and our abſolute Need of him, that we cannot be nor hope for any good thing with any Reaſon but from him. Such is his infinite uncontroulable Power, that he can turn us out of Being, or into Miſery

Miſery here and hereafter; take from us our Lives, Strengths, Healths, Riches, Reputation, Parts or Gifts, which we may uſe lewdly, wickedly proudly, when he pleaſeth; make us ſneaking, ſickly, poor, contemptible, Sots or Dunces in this Life, and hereafter turn us into everlaſting Puniſhment, without Repentance and Amendment.

Such again are when we confeſs our Sins, our Sins themſelves, what they are, their Vileneſs, Iniquity, Folly, Shamefulneſs; But the Peace and Satisfaction of Conſcience ariſing from a free and hearty Confeſſion of Sin, and Senſe of an internal, ſincere, unconſtrain'd Hatred and Contempt of it, and a firm and generous Reſolution of being good for the future: I ſay, our praying frequently will bring ſuch things as theſe are into our Minds, bring them to our Obſervation and Memory, and be a cauſe too of their coming to our Minds upon any Occaſion of themſelves without our Direction. Whereas otherwiſe we ſhould have never, it may be, once had thought of ſome of thoſe things, and of others of them very rarely and ſlightly. And ſo we ſee by Experience, that generally thoſe who moſt neglect this Duty of Prayer, publick, private, ſecret, ſet and fixed, or at leaſt occaſional and ejaculatory, perpetually only employ themſelves about other matters; and more rarely think of

theſe things, and ſuch like. Some never have them come into their Thoughts all their Lives time; others think not of them not in a Day, a Week, a longer time; and when they do, it is very tranſiently and ſlightly, and theſe excellent things are ſoon turned out, becauſe not liked. God, and their Duty, and their Happineſs, and things that belong hereto are not in all their Thoughts ſometimes; eſpecially this is ſeen in thoſe who if they ſhould not have Time, or Ability, or Opportunity to pray in private or ſecret (which is an ordinary Excuſe hereafter to be anſwered,) yet ſurely want not the Opportunity of the Publick, where Prayers are provided for them, and ſomething elſe: But yet ſottiſhly and careleſly they ſit and loll at Home, and it may be do worſe, or idly ramble abroad. We ſee that theſe are generally Perſons void of the moſt ordinary Degree of Goodneſs, even of Humanity it ſelf, who care for neither God nor Man; wretched Brutes! who when God out of his unſpeakable Goodneſs hath ſo highly honoured them with a capacity of knowing and worſhipping, honouring, loving and obeying him, of converſation and communion with himſelf, yet will not make uſe thereof; but impudently by this their Carriage in Particular, dare proclaim to the World, that they care not for him, and will have nothing to do with him,

and

and wilfully deſcend ſo far to be like the Beaſts. But God will have to do with them, and Time will come, when neither God nor Man will pity their intolerable Torment, and they ſhall howl under the juſt Wrath of that God whom they would not love or honour. And all honeſt and but tolerably well minded Men, that have but any reſpect for their Creator (much more Chriſtians) and have not caſt away all Senſe of him, ought after neighbourly Advice and Admonition, if they will not amend, to have an Abhorrency of ſuch Perſons as ſuch, as well as Pity for them, as capable of better things.

But now to proceed, The oftner our Duty in general, or our particular Duties come to our Thoughts, the more likely it is we ſhall practiſe them; The oftner our Faults come to our Minds, and we remember them, the more likely we ſhall avoid and mend them; The oftner we think of God but in general, much more in particular of his Power, all-ſeeing Knowledge, his Goodneſs, his Mercy, Juſtice, conſequently Heaven, Hell, the more ſurely ſhall we be diſpoſed to do our Duty, and have a Care of and abſtain from all Sin. Our Prayers therefore being the Occaſion of bringing ſuch things as theſe are into our Thoughts, and of furniſhing our Memory therewith, and of their often actually appearing and occurring

curring to us, will be alſo one Means
preſerving us in any degree of Goodn
we have, and continually mending us, a
making us better. And ſo much the mor
by how much they are the more frequen
the more time we ſpend therein, and we c
ſpare from the neceſſary Occaſions of Life
which we ought not to neglect or omit.
we obſerve, we ſhall find that mens thought
affections and inclinations are generally mo
real and vigorous to thoſe things about whi
they are moſt frequently employed. Th
reaſon of which is moſt eaſie and natura
Nor is it to be hoped that men ſhould be o
more intellectual and virtuous, ſpiritual an
religious temper, till they employ more tim
about ſuch matters, And hence it comes t
paſs, that the publick Worſhip of God, an
private too, though conſtantly at appointe
times uſed, do ſo little good (yet ſome) an
are ſo little influential upon mens temper an
actions. Where they have one thought o
affection about their duty or thoſe thing
which may diſpoſe them to practiſe it,
they have thouſands about other objects. N
wonder that their advantage of frequency
maintains the prevalence of their influence
And becauſe our Ability or Opportunity ma
be leſs for ſet times, ejaculatory Prayers ar
fitteſt and eaſieſt to be frequently uſed, which
may be done by ſober and honeſt Minds upo
all

all Occaſions. One even at his Plow-handle or in his Shop, ſurely may upon any Occaſion often acknowledge God's Bleſſing, his Power, Wiſdom, Goodneſs in preparing things for the Uſe of Man in his poor Life, and particularly in giving good Seaſons, good Trading, Honeſty, Reputation, competent Gain; or he may acknowledge his Power and Juſtice, and his own or other Mens Faults, whereby he provokes God, when he obſerves ill-natured or barren Ground, or unſeaſonable Weather, or Commodities ſpoiled, or Trade fail, or other evil things, and may pray to God to continue the foremencioned good Bleſſings, and to give men thankful and obedient Hearts and Lives for them, or to prevent and remove thoſe evil things which they fear or feel; and in order thereto, that they may ſee what is amiſs in themſelves, and mend that, as perhaps Neglect of God, and to ſerve him.

I ſay, any one at his Plow or Harrow, or in his Shop may ſurely upon theſe Occaſions do thus as eaſily, if they had mind, as Swear and Curſe at their Cattle, or Fellow-Servants, or Maſters, or Chapmen, or Cuſtomers.

It is a very good and laudable Cuſtom which Men generally have, when they mention any conſiderable Benefit or good thing received, to ſay, *God be thanked*; when any Fault

Fault of their own, to ſay, *God forgive them* when any Calamity or Evil which they fe or fear, to ſay, *God have Mercy on them.* A theſe are ejaculatory Prayers. But then, they are Cuſtomary ſo they ſhould be Hear and Men ſhould have a care to live as they Sa Theſe and many other Ejaculatory Praye may be oftner uſed in our Thoughts th ſpoken, for fear of ſeeming Affectation, whi may offend.

SECT. IV.

III. A Third Way how Praying keeps u good and makes us better, is b being an Occaſion of Imitation o God. And this by the Means of Suggeſtion and bringing God and his excellent Perfecti ons and Attributes to our Minds, and by th Exerciſe of our Admiration, Honour, Reve rence of him as one powerful, wiſe, hol and righteous, of our Love to him as one good to us, good to all his Creatures, Good neſs it ſelf. For all theſe Affections in us to any Perſon, diſpoſe us effectually to Imita tion of all we can in him in general, but eſpe cially to that which we more *particularly* ad mire and love. The ſerious and frequent admiring therefore and loving particularly in God his Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, will

diſpoſe

diſpoſe us to an imitation of him therein. The reaſon why we do not ſee Men's Prayers do them this way any great good (though, I think, they rarely perform them ſo badly, but they would be worſe if they did not perform them at all) is becauſe they perform their Prayers ſo ſeldom, or ſo ſuperficially, coldly or heartleſly. Sometimes they pray only with their Lips, when their Hearts are far from what they do; they are cold and dull, not at all warmed or touched. The very loving God for his Benefits only *in particular to us*, will diſpoſe us to Imitation, if we do but attend to or remember, that to imitate him will certainly pleaſe him, which Love diſpoſeth us unto. And that our Love and Thankfulneſs to God for his Benefits in our Prayers may more certainly have this excellent Effect of Imitation of him, and conſequently being holy; it will be very good when we have acknowledged God's Favours, to ask our ſelves ſeriouſly, what we ſhall return him again, how we ſhall pleaſe him; and then to anſwer our ſelves, by being like himſelf in all manner of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, and hating all manner of Sin and Iniquity.

We ſee alſo by Experience, that we imitate thoſe with whom we much and frequently converſe, and have a great Opinion of; we do as they do, we entertain our ſelves

ſelves with the ſame Thoughts, Affections, Actions. And ſo it is with Minds; who frequently and heartily converſe with God, that is, have him the Object of their Thoughts and Affections in Prayer, and have an honourable Opinion of him (as who hath not?) they generally are more like him; I am ſure at leaſt are much diſpoſed thereto. Experience alſo teacheth us, that Men who think of God, are much according to their Notions of him, as they think of him and apprehend him, And therefore if they look upon God as a powerful, arbitrary, angerful Being, ſo he be not ſo to themſelves, and they be but ſecure; they themſelves are apt to be ſo too, and oft-times actually are ſo. They contrariwiſe who worſhip God principally for and take notice of his Univerſal Goodneſs and Love, as his principal and only abſolute Perfection, and dearly love and admire him as Omniſcient and Omnipotent Love, who, though he can do what he liſt, doth always what is beſt: Theſe, I ſay, are apt to be of a univerſally, generouſly benign Temper to all, not arbitrary, partial, but good to every one, as is beſt for the general good, or for the Publick.

Again, Our Prayers by Converſe with ſpiritual and great Objects, ſpiritualizing and widening our Minds, do make us more capable of apprehending and imitating of God's

God's Perfections, eſpecially his Holineſs or Univerſal Righteouſneſs.

SECT. V.

V. A Fourth Way how our Prayers do make us good and better, and preſerve us in Goodneſs, is more particularly by bringing to our Minds the Condition of our Petitions being granted. We cannot pray for or deſire any thing of God with any Hopes of Succeſs, but upon the Condition of our being good; the degrees of our Faith and Hope, are to anſwer the degrees of our Goodneſs. And this way is proper to that part of Prayer called Petition. We all of us naturally know and believe that God is holy and juſt, and that he governs all the World for its greateſt good, and that it is for its greateſt good, and therefore one of his Laws or Rules, to reward the good, and to puniſh the bad, and that one proper way of Puniſhment which God may uſe, is to take away the good things that wicked Men have already, or to croſs their deſires, that they ſhould not proſper or ſucceed in what they would have; and if we believe this, we can have no Hopes of Succeſs, or that our Petitions ſhould be granted ſo far as we know our ſelves to be wicked; and if we have no

Hopes

Hopes to ſpeed without repentance and reformation, either we ſhall never give ourſelves the trouble to ask at all; or if our neceſſity or choice put us upon Asking, our Conſciences will alſo put us upon Reformation of what we have known to be amiſs in our ſelves, and ſometimes (if we be in a great fright) of what we never knew or ſuſpected before. Hence it comes to paſs that wicked men whoſe Conſciences fly in their Faces, or are apt to whiſper ſomething which they would not hear of or amend, when they want any thing, though they know not how to come by it without God's immediate Help, (as Health, Strength, Freedom from Poverty, Priſon, Pain, Sickneſs, Death,) yet are ſo loth to betake themſelves to their Prayers: They will uſe any Means, though never ſo improbable and difficult, and run and ſhift from one thing to another, and employ and buſie their Invention or Endeavour, and hope this and t'other thing will effect what they would have, rather than apply themſelves to God; when that hearty Prayers is ſo facile and likely a way to obtain what they would have, and is a Means which being uſed with all other will make them more ſucceſsful.

I know ſometimes Conſcience may be very forgetful, dull, partial, erroneous through want of Sincerity and Strength in Goodneſs,

neſs, and Men may be very confident in their Petitions too, when really they are at the ſame time very bad, and that even in their very Prayers they are performing; and therefore that the Prayers of ſuch perſons do neither ſuppoſe, nor make them good: but yet for the moſt part it is otherwiſe. Eſpecially when mens ſins are more plain and manifeſt, and the evil which they lye under, or fear, is very great, and ſeems no other way remediable but by God's help: then their Conſciences will be awakened to a ſuſpition of themſelves, to reflection, examination and confeſſion, and to ſome kind of promiſe or reſolution of amendment before they will have the confidence to addreſs any deſire to God. They are aſhamed and afraid without ſomething at leaſt of repentance and begging of God's pardon to requeſt any thing from him, whoſe moſt juſt Laws they have negligently or contemptuouſly violated, and whom they know to be ſo juſt as no more to approve and acquit the guilty without repentance, then to neglect or condemn the innocent and righteous. Of the firſt ſort of men were the Phariſees, who were generally very bad men, but probably did not always know their own badneſs and hypocriſie. Theſe made frequent and long Prayers in places where it might be obſerved; they uſed ſome

of them to ſtand fixed in Contemplation a
hour that they might diſpoſe their Hearts t
Prayer, as is mentioned by the antien
Jewiſh Authors: and yet under pretence o
colour hereof (though they might not a
tend to their Inſincerity at that time) devou
red Widows Houſes, and were ambitious
covetous, proud, vain-glorious, fraudu
lent, oppreſſive, envious, as we read, *Matt.* 23
It appears alſo from our Saviour's Parable o
the Phariſee and Publican, who went u
into the Temple to pray, that ſome Me
may pray with a great deal of Confidence
who are bad enough; but yet are woe
drouſly conceited of themſelves for thei
own Sanctity: and that for this very reaſon
namely, becauſe they pray and faſt, which
are but fallible Signs. *Luke* 18. *Verſe* 10
The Phariſee indeed did not there Petition
but thanked God for his great degree of Ho
lineſs: but without doubt he that thought ſo
well of himſelf, would have asked too with
Confidence enough.

Moreover, we that are Chriſtians not on
ly know by natural Light that we have no
Reaſon to hope, that God will grant us our
Petitions and Deſires ſo far as we are wicked
Perſons, and that Obedience is a Condition
of Acceptance: but we are expreſly in
formed as much alſo by the Scripture. *God*
heareth not Sinners, (ſaid the blind Man in
the

the Goſpel) *but if any Man be a Worſhipper of him, and doth his Will, him he heareth: John* 9. *Verſe* 31. And we do not ſee what he ſaid reproved. *Offer unto God Thankſgiving, and pay thy Vows unto the moſt high*; that is, worſhip, love, and obey God (and then) *Call upon me in the day of Trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorifie me. But unto the Wicked, God ſaith, what haſt thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou ſhouldeſt take my Covenant into thy Mouth*, (of which one part ſure on God's ſide, was to be a God and Father, and to give all good things) *ſeeing thou hateſt Inſtruction and caſteſt my Words behind thee. Pſalm* 50. *Verſe* 14. *Whoſo offereth Praiſe, glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his Converſation aright, will I ſhew the Salvation of God. Verſe* 23. So *Pſalm* 5. *Verſe* 3. &c. *My Voice ſhalt thou hear (or hear thou) in the Morning, O Lord in the Morning will I direct my Prayer (or my Soul) unto thee, and will look up.* And then follows, *For thou art not a God that haſt Pleaſure in Wickedneſs*, &c. that is, indeed thou art not a God who doſt approve Wickedneſs and hear ſuch Perſons who are wicked; but contrariwiſe thou hateſt ſuch and wilt deſtroy them. *But I will come into thy Houſe in the Multitude of thy Mercy*, &c. I am a Perſon who worſhip and fear thee, and therefore I pray unto thee to hear me. *Offer the*

Sacrifices of Righteouſneſs; that is, the *Sacrifices* which are lawful and right, commanded by God; or be righteous, obey God, keep his Commandments, which is the beſt Sacrifice, or offer *Sacrifices* from a righteous and holy Mind, and then *put your Truſt in the Lord. Pſalm* 4. *Verſe* 5. And ſo *Verſe* 3. *The Lord hath ſet apart him that is godly for himſelf, the Lord will hear when I ſhall call upon him.* Take notice, O ye Sons of Men, that God eſpecially favours godly Men, and will hear their Prayers. *Pſalm* 66. *Verſe* 18. *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not hear me.* We have many places too in the Prophets to this purpoſe and effect, as in *Iſaiah* 1. Where, when God by the Prophet had affectionately complained of the Univerſal and exceeding great Wickedneſs of the Nation of the *Jews*, to whom he had been ſo good a Father; he takes notice, *Verſe* 11. that notwithſtanding that their Wickedneſs they brought their Sacrifices, (which were joined with Acknowledgments, Petitions and Praiſes it is likely expreſſed with Words; however they were Signs of them, *(viz.)* of Thanks of the Acknowledgments of the Divine Perfections, of Deſire of Pardon, or other good things) I ſay, they brought their Sacrifices punctually enough. Though he utterly rejected them, and required them not at their Hands, perſiſting

ſiſting in their wicked Practices. *To what purpoſe is the multitude of your Sacrifices*, &c. *Verſe* 11. and *Verſe* 12. *When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your Hands, to tread my Courts? And bring no more vain Oblations*, &c. to the 15. *Verſe*. Where he plainly tells them, *When they ſpread forth their Hands, he would hide his Eyes, and when they made many Prayers, he would not hear*, ſo long as their Hands were full of Blood; and ſo of other Sins, as appears by what follows. But if they hoped to be pardoned, to have his Favour, and conſequently to be heard, they muſt repent, *put away the evil of their doings, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well*, &c. *Come now let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord. Verſe* 16. &c. Now he would permit them to converſe with him, to Sacrifice and Pray to him, *&c.*

Likewiſe in *Iſaiah* 58. Though the People of *Iſrael* were generally guilty of many and notorious Tranſgreſſions of God's Laws, ſuch as were Oppreſſion, Contention, Cruelty one to another, Tyranny, Hard-Heartedneſs, Uncharitableneſs, Fraud and Lying, Profanation of *their* Sabbath, or converting that Day which was appointed and commanded by God unto *them* expreſly for his publick Worſhip, and for the Eaſe of Servants and Cattel to the Uſe of their ordinary Labours, and doing what they pleaſed,

neglecting the Divine Worſhip, and the Uſe appointed: Though, I ſay, the People of *Iſrael* were generally guilty of theſe great Tranſgreſſions againſt God's Laws, as appears by the whole Chapter: yet they *ſought God daily, Verſe* 2. *and delighted to know his Ways*, that is, appeared ſo to do, or really did delight and were well pleaſed in ſome of the external Part of God's Worſhip, Sacrifices, Prayers, Faſtings, and afflicting their Soul, *like as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs*, (were every where good) and forſook not the Ordinances of God, *&c.* and they were ſo confident of their Deſert from God, as to challenge him with Injuſtice for neglecting them. But God tells them plainly, that the external Parts of his Worſhip, of Praying, Weeping, Faſting, Looking ſorrowfully and ſordidly were not the things that he had choſen to procure them any Favour from him: but it was reforming themſelves, and leaving all the above-named Iniquities, being in all Inſtances and Expreſſions Univerſally Charitable to their Neighbour, not oppreſſing or tyrannizing, being tender-hearted, compaſſionate, *&c.* It was theſe and ſuch like *ſhould cauſe their Light to break forth as the Morning, and their Health ſpring forth ſpeedily*; that is, ſhould make them a joyous and happy People. And *Verſe* 9. expreſly, *Then ſhalt thou call and the Lord*

Lord ſhall anſwer, thou ſhalt cry, and he ſhall ſay, here I am. If thou take away from the midſt of thee the Yoke, that is, Oppreſſion, *the putting forth of the Finger*, that is, Deriſion and Contempt, it may be, of thy poor unhappy Neighbour, *and ſpeaking Vanity*, that is, Lying or Fraud; (For by Vanity the Hebrew ordinarily expreſſeth Falſhood, *&c.*) If thou reform and mend thy wicked Ways, then mayſt thou hope for and expect according to God's own Promiſe (when it ſhall ſeem fit to him, and that it will often do) that thy Prayers ſhall be heard, otherwiſe thy Prayers and Confidence too are but Preſumption and Impudence.

It is true, theſe laſt places of the Prophet *Iſaiah* and ſuch like prove that which I have before mentioned, *(viz.)* That Mens Conſciences may ſometimes ſo forget themſelves, be ſo partial and erroneous, that they may pray boldly and confidently, when they may rather expect the Taunt there, and their Prayers to be thrown into their Faces; that is their Prayers to be hated and contemn'd by God, and themſelves to be puniſhed for their Hypocriſie, and that therefore all Prayers do not always in all things neceſſarily ſuppoſe or make Men good.

But then they inform Men too (which is the End why I have brought them) that if Men hope to be heard by God, and to have

their Prayers granted, they must be good, and not live in the practice of known Sin, or through Hypocrisie, or Insincerity, Laziness or Prevalency of some Lust above their Duty, wilfully be ignorant whether they live in any Sin or no, or flatter themselves in general they do not. And those Men who know thus much by natural Conscience, Reason, the Scriptures, and often attend to it, (which are most Men in some Degree or other, though not all) if they betake themselves to pray to God for the removal of any Evil, or the granting of them any good, will first be apt to reflect upon their Lives and Actions, and promise unto God Amendment and Reformation of what they know to be bad in themselves, and to beg his Pardon, that they may with Hopes of Success pray to him and effectually obtain their Desires: and to do this often and constantly, surely will be an excellent Means for the preserving Men from all Sin, nay, to make them more sincerely, vigorously, constantly and universally better.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

V. THE Fifth Way how our Praying may make us better and preſerve us in Goodneſs is by Remuneration or Reward; that is, God Almighty may immediately or mediately reward our Prayers, even in general, being ſuch as they ſhould be. God may reward our dutiful Acknowledgment of his infinite Perfections, and our being affected with them accordingly, our Admiration, Honour, Love, Thankfulneſs, Addreſs to him, humble Dependence upon him exerciſed in our Prayers, with the greateſt Bleſſings he can beſtow upon us; and that is, with Increaſe, Growth, Strength in Holineſs and Goodneſs. When we pray unto him, depend upon him humbly, and in Reſolution of Obedience and well-doing (which alſo are Signs of our Acknowledgments of his Perfections) even for any other good things beſides Goodneſs, as for Wiſdom, Inſtruction, Deliverance from bodily Dangers, Plenty, good Succeſs in worldly Affairs, a peaceable and comfortable Life, *&c.* Then it may ſeem good to God ſometimes to reward this Exerciſe of our Goodneſs, or of thoſe things which are ſuch proper Means thereof, with better things than what

what we ask; and with them too, eve
this principal one of all, of preſerving a
ſtrengthning our Souls in Holineſs in gen
ral, and in particular Virtues and Graces.

But much more ſtill have we reaſon t
think that God will beſtow this incomp
rable Bleſſing upon us when we humbl
ſincerely and importunately beſeech it a
his hands above all other things. Wh
we pray to him with our whole Hearts, th
he would but make us ſincerely and gen
rouſly good, holy Lovers of himſelf and
all Perſons, to do all things out of an Un
verſal Charity and Love, never to gratif
any *inordinate* or *immoderate* Appetite; an
as for other things we plainly are indifferen
to them, but only ſo far forth as they m
be Inſtruments hereof, of our being or d
ing good. This is a Petition that argu
and acts a Temper of Mind than which no
thing in Heaven and Earth is ſo acceptable
unto God, and therefore to encourage i
and our Deſires and Endeavours after i
(eſpecially if they be frequent and long)
it is the moſt likely thing that God will hea
our Prayers, grant our Deſires, make ou
Endeavours (in ſome Meaſure, and Time o
other) ſucceſsful. We have heard before
the blind Man's Opinion, and the common
Opinion of Mankind, That if any Man b
a Worſhipper of God, God heareth him,
and

nd in this ſurely rather than any other hing.

Our Saviour to encourage our Addreſſes o God, ſuch as they ought to be, hath exreſly promiſed Succeſs when it ſeems fit to od (and it doth ſo ſometimes, or elſe there s no ſucceſs at all:) *Ask and it ſhall be given ou, ſeek and you ſhall find, knock and it ſhall e opened unto you, for every one that asketh* he ought *receiveth*, (when it ſeems fit to od, and that is very often) *and he that eketh findeth and to him that knocketh it ſhall e opened.* Which our Saviour illuſtrateth y a Similitude of earthly Parents, who ive to their Children upon their asking eceſſary or convenient things: how much nore will God who is infinitely wiſer and etter to us, and loves us all more with a ove of Benevolence than our earthly Paents can do, give them unto us. *What Man is there*, &c. *Matt.* 7. to *Verſe* 12. The ame we have in St. *Luke*, *Chap.* 11. *Verſe* 13. Where it is, *How much more ſhall your heaenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ſk him?* In *David's Pſalms* are many places o this purpoſe, *Pſalm* 145. *Verſe* 18, 19. *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon im in Truth. He will fulfil the Deſires of them hat fear him, he alſo will hear their Cry and will ſave them.* Nothing more ordinary han for the Apoſtles in their Epiſtles to pray

pray for their Diſciples and Believers th
were their Charge, that they might incre
and be ſtrengthned in Holineſs and Go
neſs, in all Graces and good Works. A
ſurely they would not have prayed ſo, u
leſs they had had hopes that God wou
ſome time or other and in ſome meaſure he
them. Thus only for Example, St. *Pa*
Theſſal. 1. 3. 12. *The Lord make you to i*
creaſe and abound in love one to another, and
all men, even as we do towards you, to the e
he may eſtabliſh your hearts unblamable in ho
neſs before God even our Father at the comi
of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt with all his Saint
And *Theſſal.* 2. 2. 16. *Now our Lord Je*
Chriſt himſelf, and God even our Father, whi
hath loved us and given us everlaſting conſol
tion and good hope through grace, comfort yo
hearts and ſtabliſh you in every good word an
work. And if God would hear their an
conſequently our Prayers for others to mak
and keep them good and make them better
then ſurely there is reaſon to think he wil
hear us for our ſelves; nay there is much
more reaſon; for it is a ſign that we have
a real and prevalent Love to Goodneſs, whe
we deſire it for our ſelves: but the deſiring
it for others may not ſo much ſignifie it.
We may often wiſh others to be good (as bad
Parents do their Children ſometimes) and
yet not our ſelves. Becauſe others being good

s not inconſiſtent perhaps with any beloved uſt of our own, but our own being good s. Whence it may be obſerved that a real Love of the Saints or of holy Men which ath by ſome been laid down as a certain Character of a *Saint* (that is of a Perſon who is habitually and prevalently holy and who ſhall be ſaved) is not truly ſo. It is a ign indeed of ſome Degree of Holineſs, but ot of a prevalent degree thereof.

And thus much for the firſt general Benefit to our ſelves of Praying, *(viz.)* it is a likely Means duly performed, to preſerve s in Goodneſs and to make us better, to ncreaſe and ſtrengthen in us Holineſs and Goodneſs, and all the particular Inſtances hereof, and that by theſe ſeveral Ways I have mentioned.

SECT. VII.

I. A Second general Benefit to our ſelves by Prayer, is that of Comfort, Joy, Delight of Soul, Satisfaction, Acquieſcence, Eaſe of Spirit, and that theſe four ways among others.

1. Great pleaſure and delight of Soul ariſeth immediately from the Operations or Actions of our Souls terminated upon God in

in Prayer very naturally, that is witho
the ſpecial immediate influence of God up
our minds. For Example, In our ackno
ledgment of the Divine Perfections and A
tributes, ſo often mentioned, we take n
tice of (or contemplate, if we be more a
and have more time, in ſecret eſpeciall
God's infinite Perfections and Excellenci
his All-mighty Power, his All-comprehe
ing Knowledge, his Univerſal and Infi
Goodneſs to all his Creatures, and therei
ſometimes his tender Mercy forbearing, f
giving, beſtowing, promiſing, rewardi
otherwhile his as wholeſome Juſtice in co
trouling, chaſtiſing and puniſhing wicke
neſs, and that God is eternally, immutabl
infinitely all this: I ſay, we in our Pray
more or leſs take notice of or attend
ſuch things as theſe, the very thoughts
which ſo vaſt objects are vaſtly pleaſing a
delightful to the Soul. To caſt but ſom
glances at them toucheth the ſoul with
great and ſmart pleaſure and delight, as i
is in our moſt ſet, Cuſtomary, Publick
Private Prayers, where we can have tim
only more tranſiently to look at theſe things
But in our ſecret and retired Devotions,
where we may take as much time as we wi
to fix our thoughts upon them, to admir
them, and then think of them again (if ou
ſouls be but fitted for this Employment by

ſober and refined temper of body by frequent uſe and God's influence) the delight and pleaſure may be to a raviſhing degree. And the more particular, diſtinct and comprehenſive our Knowledge is, the greater our Admiration and the more intenſe our pleaſure ſtill; which it is certain ſome ſouls have experienced to ſuch a degree, that they would not change with the beſt furniſhed ſenſualiſt or worldling, nor hearken to the motion without the higheſt contempt.

But then much more ſtill is this pleaſure increaſed by the paſſions and actions of Love, Deſire, Joy, Truſt and Hope, Reſolutions of Obedience and Imitation, which the view and apprehenſion of the Divine Perfections produce in us ſo far forth as we are fitted therefore by ſpirituality to apprehend them, and by an habitual goodneſs and generoſity of temper to be affected with them. The very paſſion of Love it ſelf is an extraordinary, agreeable, pleaſant and ſweet thing to our minds, and who is there, except very unfortunate natured perſons, who doth not experience it in ſome thing or other? But what may or can be beloved with a more ardent and intenſe degree of it than God? Than God, I ſay, when we conceive him to be infinite love it ſelf (for God is Love) to be univerſally good to all things which he hath made,

made, eternally, immutably, and in infinite degree; insomuch that there never can be any one thing in the World that is not the Effect of his love and goodness to the whole World, even his permission and punishment of Sin it self: than God, I say, who is uncontroulable and infinite in Power too, and can do what he pleaseth, upon whom all things depend, and from whom they have all, and that no longer than pleaseth him, and yet is infinite Love and Goodness; What can or may be more beloved than such a Being as he is? I say, what *may be* loved by us more ardently than God? not, what is so? Our minds may be very sensual and dull in their apprehensions, very much corrupted, degenerate and debased in their affections, so that we may not apprehend these spiritual Excellencies, nor have any or but very little inclinations to them or affections for them in any other.

We may our selves be so ill-natured as not much to be taken or pleased with all the expressions of others kindness and good nature, unless it be to our selves; nor then neither, unless they be able as well as kind, and can do something for us, as well as will it: which is a sign, that 'tis the persons power more than his goodness that we love or esteem, and his power too only to do us good. I say, a man may be of this dull, selfish,

ſelfiſh, brutiſh Nature, and be pleaſed principally with power and other things, not at all or little with loving or good nature. This man indeed in his Prayers will have little love for the Univerſal Goodneſs and loving Kindneſs of God, and conſequently have little pleaſure or delight in his Prayers upon that account. But I do affirm, That there are Souls who have the greateſt ardency and pangs of love and affection to God, and dearly embrace him, and unite themſelves to him thus conſidered; and that theſe therefore find in their Prayers where they put forth this their affection, the moſt raviſhing Joy and Pleaſure. Nay, I affirm, That even the worſt of men that are the moſt ſenſual, carnal, dull and ill-natured have Souls capable of being more ſpiritual and refined in their underſtandings and affections: and of being infinitely in love with the boundleſs goodneſs and love of God, and more than with any other thing, and conſequently of a proportionable pleaſure and ſatisfaction.

The ſame is to be ſaid concerning Joy in God, who is thus infinite in love and goodneſs to all his Creatures, and hope or confident perſwaſion, and conſequent acquieſcence and repoſe of Soul in God for the Univerſal good of all. When the Soul upon the aſſurance and evidence that all things in

the World are the beſt that can or ever ſhall be, by reaſon of the immutable goodneſs and benignity of God, is not ſolicitous or vexeth it ſelf, but acquieſceth and even rejoyceth in all events to it ſelf or to others, and with great cheerlyneſs and full approbation of heart cryeth, *Thy will be done, O All mighty and All-wiſe goodneſs and Love, both in Heaven and Earth.* I ſay, theſe very Paſſions or Affections are ſweet and delicious to the Soul; and therefore being excited and exerted in Prayer, and that in prepared Souls to the higheſt degree are Prayers ſo acceptable and delightful duties.

Further, In Prayer we do not only make acknowledgment of God, admire, honour, love, rejoyce, hope in him for his Perfections in reference to all his Creatures in general: but alſo in reference to our ſelves. We admire his great goodneſs, particularly to our ſelves, and love him for it, and rejoyce in the preſent poſſeſſion, and in good hopes of the future (perhaps eternal) enjoyment of it. Which paſſions generally are in moſt men more piercing and ſtrong than upon the account of God's infinite Perfections (and eſpecially his goodneſs) referred to all his Creatures; but indeed ſhould not be ſo. Nevertheleſs it is good for us to be deeply affected with Admiration, Love, Joy, Hope of God's Goodneſs to our ſelves in any kind expreſ-

expreſſed; not in oppoſition to others good, but as one ſingle Inſtance and Example of God's Univerſal Goodneſs to all, which we moſt clearly apprehend. For, is God ſo good to us in particular? he is the ſame to all and every of his Creatures as much as is conſiſtent with the common good of all, to ſome more to ſome leſs than our ſelves. In Prayer we, I ſay, thus take notice of and ſtir up our love to God for his love to us, or thankfulneſs to God for all his paſt benefits, among which are his promiſes of future good things; we rejoyce in him for the preſent, and we hope and repoſe our ſelves on him for the future.

Now theſe very Paſſions and Affections themſelves in our Souls are the moſt agreeable and pleaſing to them, as is the very thinking and contemplation of the Infinite Power, Wiſdom, and eſpecially Goodneſs of God. All theſe Operations and Employments of our Souls are very grateful and acceptable to them. Even in this reſpect it is good for them to be here, to be thus employed; It is good for them to draw near unto God, that is, to direct their Actions and Operations to God.

SECT. VIII.

2. BUt a Second more particular Way how Prayer is for our comfort and delight, ſo far forth as we are good, is by the Exerciſe of Faith and Hope and Repoſe in God, as to all our concerns whatſoever.

Any good man when he prays to God habitually believes theſe two things.

1. That God will alwaies beſtow upon him what is juſt and fit to be beſtowed. And,

2. That the particular things he humbly beſeecheth God to grant, may be juſtly beſtowed by God upon him; that is, that it is conſiſtent with or rather effective of the greateſt good of the whole World, as hath been often ſaid: and this latter he may ſometimes believe certainly, ſometimes probably; whence ariſeth either aſſurance and expectation of the thing, or only Hope ſtrictly ſo called. As for Example, When he prays to God for the pardon of his ſins, and his conſequent favour to his perſon for Chriſt's ſake, upon the condition of his true and unfeigned repentance, amendment and change of Soul; when he cries with the poor Publican, *God be merciful to me a ſinner* (which moſt men are ſo careleſs, proud, ſelf-con-

conceited and preſumptuous as ſeldom to do) ſo far as he is conſcious to himſelf of the ſincerity of his amendment, ſo far he may be confident God will grant this his Prayer. For beſides that even by reaſon it ſelf without expreſs promiſe of the Goſpel it might be very probable; by the expreſs promiſe of the Goſpel it is moſt undoubted and certain. Even Reaſon it ſelf would judge it more probable, if it were informed that it is done for ſo excellent a perſon's ſake as Jeſus Chriſt was: But then moreover, I ſay it is the moſt expreſs promiſe of the Goſpel, and one indeed of the principal things it came to acquaint men withal, *(viz.)* That *God was in Chriſt reconciling the World to himſelf*, and that by repentance and faith in Chriſt's Name, *that is, by doing all our duty for the future as commanded from God by Chriſt*; men might have remiſſion of ſins. And ſo again, if any man deſires and prays from the bottom of his ſoul for God's grace in general to repent, and that he may forſake at laſt all ſin, and become a new man, giving up himſelf to obey God, being afraid or weary of a ſinful wicked life, as a thing unaccountable, unreaſonable; or in particular, if he prays for ſtrength to mortifie any luſt, to leave any ſin, to obtain any grace or virtue, he may be confident he ſhall be heard in ſome degree or other, ſome time or other. Per-

haps God might not hear us preſently, but excite us and ſtrengthen us to continue our Prayers more earneſtly, whereby we gain dependance upon God, humility, nay a greater thirſt after the thing we ask, and conſequently indeed a greater degree of it. I ſay, for pardon and grace if unfeignedly and heartily asked and humbly begged of God, we may be confident we ſhall be heard; both becauſe it ſeems reaſonable, and becauſe God hath more expreſly promiſed them in the Scripture. But as for other even ſpiritual good things, as natural parts or gifts of underſtanding, memory, utterance or the like, theſe it is but probable that it is the beſt God ſhould beſtow them upon us in ſome degree. And as for external good things, ſuch as health, ſtrength, beauty, riches, honour or good name, plenty or competency, deliverance, *&c.* we have leſs probability ſtill, although ſo much as to encourage us ſufficiently to propound our deſires to God too. And therefore here our hope will be more or leſs ſtrong, unleſs God hath expreſly by certain revelation promiſed any of them to us, as it was in *David*'s caſe, when he was perſecuted by *Saul* and by other Enemies, and his life ſought after. God had certainly by his Prophets, and probably to himſelf by Inſpiration promiſed he ſhould be King and ſucceed *Saul*.

Now

Now ſee how this faith effectually produceth in the ſoul of a good man Eaſe, Satisfaction, Repoſe, and Acquieſcence which are the moſt pleaſurable and delicious things. Whenever he wanteth any thing he propoſeth his deſires to God, and firſt believes that if it be juſt for God to give, and him to receive it, he ſhall have it; and this is all he deſires, nor would he ask any thing upon other terms; wherefore he knows his deſire is fully granted, he hath what he would have alwaies; which ſurely muſt needs be followed with the greateſt ſatisfaction of ſpirit. He is not any of thoſe ſelf-willed, proud, peeviſh perſons who will not be content but are impatient, if God doth not give them every particular good thing they propound or think of, whether he in wiſdom ſees it fit and juſt to be beſtowed upon them or no: As he is not one of thoſe careleſs ones who never ask any thing from God at all, but muddle on in their own contrivances and endeavours, being infinitely ſolicitous they ſhould and fretting themſelves when they do not ſucceed. He is none of thoſe who never make any reflection upon the Infinite Wiſdom, the Univerſal Goodneſs and Righteouſneſs of God, and conſequently the perfect Juſtice and Reaſonableneſs of all the Divine Appointments, be they what they will: But in all his Prayers eſpecially

he conſtantly minds, he firmly believes, he perfectly acquieſceth and rejoyceth in them, whereby he not only prevents all anguiſh and vexation to which ſolicitude and fruſtration expoſe the proud and negligent of God, but puts alſo his mind into a conſtant ſtate of repoſe, ſatisfaction and joy.

But then further for ſome things which he wants, he doth but with that ſincerity, fervency and aſſiduity that he ought or as the things deſerve, beſeech them from God, and he is firmly and confidently perſwaded (not raſhly, but) from Reaſon and Divine Revelation, that he ſhall have them. Such are they which I have before mentioned of pardon for Chriſt's ſake, either in general or for any particular ſin he may have been overtaken with, upon his ſincere diſallowance thereof, his contempt and hatred of himſelf for it, and of God's grace and ſtrength to ſubdue any luſt or corruption, or in general to mend and reform himſelf in ſome degree or other. That he ſhall receive theſe things if he ask them as he ought he is confident and fully perſwaded. And whatever men that are wicked, ſenſual, worldly, may think of theſe things he deſires, the holy and divine as well as wiſe ſoul accounts them ſo great, that as for all other matters before mentioned, ſuch as are Parts and Gifts, Riches, Plenty, Honour, Health, Strength,

Strength, Senſual Pleaſures, *&c.* he is very indifferent for his part to them, ſo he may but obtain the former, of which he is ſo firmly aſſured, if he but ask them as he ought. Nay, he knows or may conſider and attend that they indeed ſo far as he ſhould and would deſire them even for his own good are comprehended in or conſequent upon the former. For if our ſins be pardoned, we in God's favour, which we are ſo far as we are good, what may we not expect from God and be confidently aſſured of, if it be good for us? It is juſt, we know, with God by reaſon, and God hath ſaid it by Revelation, that God ſhould diſpoſe of ſuch portions of all good things whatſoever to good men, as may be moſt even for their good. God doth take the care of them that upon the performing their duty they ſhall have from him what is for their proper good; and ſure it is their wiſeſt way to leave him to be judge. Now how full of Repoſe, Acquieſcence, Peace, Eaſe and Satisfaction of Spirit doth this Faith and Belief make the Soul? If a man ſincerely, fervently, aſſiduouſly begs of God he may be good and do his duty, he ſhall certainly have ſtrength ſo to be, and ſo to do; and then ſo far as he is good he ſhall have whatever is for his good. What would a man deſire more? And if a man hath all he deſires or can deſire, and believes and hopes,

hopes, nay knows so much (all which a good man may exercise and act in Prayer) what perfect joy, delight, satisfaction and ease of mind, must he so often as he doth this be under.

If at any time the good man wants any of the inferiour good things to Virtue and Grace, as Gifts or Parts, Health, Liberty, Competency, Plenty, Peace, Good-name or Freedom and Deliverance from any of the contrary Evils which he may be in danger of and see likely to come upon him, be it Poverty, Sickness, Solitariness, Reproach, Oppression, Contention and Strife with others, loss of Goods and Dammages, nay Death or Torment it self; he humbly makes known his case, and desires to God, he *makes known his requests to God by Prayer and Supplication*; he begs of him to hear him and grant them to him, he useth his own prudence and industry, as much as the concern of the thing is, as much as he thinks and judgeth he ought to do; he examines himself, sets himself to find and mend whatever he knows amiss in himself, and to be accurately good to the utmost of his ability, that so there may be no hindrance that he can remove; and then he lays himself down in peace and sleep (*Psalm* 4. *Verse* 8.) with great ease, satisfaction, acquiescence of Soul upon one or all of these accounts; (*viz.*

because

becauſe he hopes and judgeth it more probable that God may grant and give unto him the very particular good thing that he asks, and ſometimes he may have reaſon to be pretty confident of it; or he is certainly perſwaded and firmly believes that whether he have or have not what he deſires, it is really for his good; and that God as he is better to him than himſelf, ſo he is much wiſer. Finally, he is perfectly aſſured that if God do not grant him his deſire, it is moſt juſt (or for the Univerſal good which he loves and rejoyceth in above all things) he ſhould not, and that not by any fault of his in his power to mend that he can ſee; and that if he himſelf were in God's place he would not grant the thing deſired; and that this his behaviour and temper renders him the moſt capable of all perſonal favors: he very well knows that the ſureſt way to be in the beſt condition, is for a man to be content with and rejoyce in any condition which God ſhall appoint, becauſe he is certain God's will is always for the Univerſal good: he very well knows that God is ſo wiſe and good in the government of the world as ſometimes or other to put moſt power and happineſs into the hands of thoſe who are of ſuch a truly generous and publick Spirit. Lord! what a ſweet and delicious life doth the man live that conſtantly

thus

thus believeth and practiſeth? no future fears, cares and ſolicitudes diſtract, nor preſent and incumbent evils bow down and oppreſs this happy ſoul. With upright and cheerly countenance, with ſolid joy and ſatisfaction in his thoughts he ſteadily and generouſly walks through all the variety of conditions of life and being the Divine Wiſdom may diſpoſe him into. Who would not be a good man that he may thus pray? and who would not pray that he may enjoy ſo great a happineſs? who would be ſo weak and fooliſh as for the indulgence and gratification of ſome pitiful mean and baſe appetite, for the preſent enjoyment of ſome vile and unreaſonable luſt or ſin, forego and quit all his faith, confidence and hope in God and the conſequent delight, acquieſcence, eaſe, peace and joy of ſoul upon all occaſions, being aſhamed ever to think of God, much more to addreſs himſelf to him or ask any thing at his hand though he ſhould be in never ſo great diſtreſs? Who would loſe the benefit and comfort of ſo good a Friend for what can never make the leaſt part of recompenſe? Yes, Let Atheiſts and Worldlings live without any minding of or addreſſing themſelves to God if they pleaſe, the good man knows too well the ſweetneſs, the profit and the pleaſure thereof to do likewiſe.

David was a truly excellent Example of this

this uſefulneſs and benefit of Prayer. It ſeems to have been his moſt uſual Cordial which he often took to ſupport his fainting and tired ſoul, to quell and compoſe his vexations, fears, diſturbances, to alleviate and remove his grief and ſadneſs. We'l give an inſtance or two. *Pſalm* 42. Firſt he mentions his preſent ſad and miſerable condition in many reſpects, as his being baniſhed out of his Country (it is likely, by *Saul)* and principally from the Publick Worſhip of his God for which he panted and thirſted, *Oh when ſhall I come and appear before God? Verſe* 1, 2, 4, 6. Then his Enemies contempt and inſulting over him, and eſpecially their not believing that he was ſo great a Favourite of God's, but rather that God had rejected him or minded him not, *Verſe* 3, 10. But to comfort and chear himſelf, he prays to God, and is very confident God will hear him (as he had reaſon) and cheerlily chides himſelf, *Ver.* 8, 9, 11. *Yet the Lord will command his loving kindneſs in the day time, and in the night his Song ſhall be with me, and my Prayer to the God of my life*; that is, yet I will pray to my God, and I truſt and know he will give me cauſe to rejoyce and praiſe him by his hearing of me at all times. *I will ſay unto God my Rock, why haſt thou forſaken me, why go I mourning becauſe of the oppreſſion of the Enemy?* And *Verſe* 11. *Why art thou caſt down*

down O my Soul, why art thou ſo diſquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I ſhall yet praiſe him who is the health of my Countenance and my God.

Again, The very next *Pſalm (viz.)* 43. he prays very paſſionately to God for deliverance from his Enemies, who were unmerciful, deceitful, unjuſt; and that God would bring him back again to enjoy his Publick Worſhip in his Temple, from which he ſeems now baniſhed; *Oh ſend out* (ſaith he) *thy light and thy truth* (that is, perhaps, thy enlightning or rejoycing truth in performing of thy Promiſes thou haſt made to me) *let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill Sion* (the place where the Temple was built) *and to thy Tabernacles*, that is, the Temple built inſtead of the Tabernacle, where God eſpecially manifeſted himſelf, or where were very ſpecial effects of his Power and Preſence. Then he Vows unto God that with exceeding joy and thankfulneſs he would make uſe of and improve that favour, *Verſe* 4. *Then will I go unto the Altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy*, &c. and then *Verſe* the laſt, he is full of good hope and firm confidence that God who was the health of his countenance (that is, the cauſe of all his joy and of his content which uſeth to be ſhewed by ones healthful aſpect and countenance) and who was his God, would

heat

hear his Petition at laſt, *(viz.)* that he ſhould praiſe him therefore, and that publickly in the Temple.

Again, in *Pſalm* 55. he deſcribes the miſerable plight that he was in, becauſe of the conſtant Machinations and plots of his Enemies, deceitful and bloody men, (as 'tis *v.* 23.) nay of thoſe who had been his Friends and Confidents, who had forſaken him in his diſgrace and adverſity (as it is uſual) and contemned him, *Verſe* 12. his Enemies contriyed even to take away his Life, they oppreſſed him with Accuſations and Reproaches, and wrathfully hated him, whence he was full of Complaints and Mourning, in ſo much that there was likelihood of his death thereby; which (though another ſenſe may be too) he expreſſeth in *Verſe* 4, 5, by *his heart being pained and the terrours of death fallen upon him, and fearfulneſs and trembling coming upon him, and horrour overwhelming him.* But then the courſe he takes is to pray to God with hope and truſt in him. By theſe he reſcues himſelf from this ſadneſs and grief of Soul, and eaſes, comforts and ſatisfies it, *Verſe* 16. *As for me I will call upon God, and the Lord ſhall ſave me.* Verſe 17. *Evening and Morning and at Noon-day* (that is very frequently) he would *pray and cry aloud, and God ſhould hear his voice.* And *Verſe* 22. *Caſt thy burden*, that is what grieves thee, *upon the*

the Lord and he ſhall ſuſtain thee. He ſhall never ſuffer the righteous to be moved; that is, himſelf to be fruſtrated of his hope.

SECT. IX.

III. A Third Way how Prayer is for our eaſe, comfort and ſatisfaction of mind, is by reflection upon our having performed our moſt juſt and reaſonable duty to God, and upon ſome more than ordinary good qualities in our ſelves that may upon this occaſion appear; as in general upon our ability for and our good will to this duty or performance; that we are able and diſpoſed for ſuch excellent things as are in Prayer: more particularly that our minds are ſo able to converſe with ſpiritual things and future, yea eternal, and to be affected with them; ſuch as God, his Nature and Actions; our own Souls, their Actions and Inclinations, the State after Death, the Affairs of the Life hereafter; That we can take notice of God's Perfections, acknowledge them, really honour him, love and reſolve to obey him, to put our truſt in him and depend upon him; that we can take notice of and grieve ſincerely and heartily for the irregularities of our Actions, and our bad and ſinful Temper and Inclinations; be pleaſed with,

with, desire, pray for Virtue and Grace; that we can think of, attend to and be frequently and much affected with things of future reward and misery, Heaven and Hell; that we are not sensual, dull, worldly, earthly-minded persons, who can mind nothing but sensible, present and worldly matters for this short life:

All men are naturally inclined to believe and confusedly see that such spiritual and future things as we have mentioned, are more excellent, more perfect (that is, of more good effect) than sensible and present worldly things; and consequently that it is a greater perfection and excellency in a man to know, contemplate, be affected with those former than these latter, to have his mind conversant with and employed about them: which is one reason why the persons who profess and really live or seem to live such a life are generally honoured and reverenced.

Further, A man after such a performance as a discreet and affectionate Prayer may reflect not only upon his *ability and sufficiency* for such excellent things, but also upon his *love to them and good will to them, his esteem for them, that he actually is so affected, and at that particular time.*

Particularly after an understanding and affectionate Prayer, it is very acceptable to

make reflection that he hath at that time performed ſo noble and excellent a part of his duty, and that which more immediately reſpects God; that he is not altogether careleſs of God, lives without him, forgets him days without number; but that he hath honoured him by his expreſs acknowledgments of his Infinite Perfections; by humbly petitioning him for what he wants and what is good and juſt for him; by rendring him hearty thanks and actually loving him for his manifold favours, even for all he hath or ever had, for any degree of Holineſs, for Knowledge and Wiſdom, Parts, Gifts, Riches or Competency, Reputation, Friends, Security from Enemies, Health, Strength, Power, Opportunity or Advantage to do Good, Peace, Joy, Satisfaction, Happineſs here, Hopes and Aſſurance of greater Perfection and Happineſs after Death and parting with all here; and for all his boundleſs Goodneſs and benignity of his Nature to all his Creatures: that he hath honoured him by an aſſured but juſt Truſt and Confidence in him, by a free ſubmiſſion of his Will to his Will in all things, and conforming of it chearfully thereunto, to do all he commands him, and to be in any condition he appoints or diſpoſeth: that he hath honoured him by a ready and free confeſſion of, and piercing hearty grief for, and inward deteſtation of all

all his unreaſonable Violations of his Juſt and Holy Laws made known either by Reaſon or Revelation, by Natural Conſcience or God's Word, and conſequently of the Eternal Laws of Righteouſneſs: that he hath honoured him by asking from him as the only ſupreme, juſt, and yet propitious Judge of the World, pardon and forgiveneſs for Chriſt's ſake that he would not puniſh him, but moſt of all by importunately begging his ſupervenient Grace, Strength and Influence, his Aſſiſtance one way or other that he might not Offend or do contrary to his Duty any more in any kind. I ſay, when a man hath performed ſo noble and excellent a part of his Duty towards God which tends ſo much to make him Divine and Perfect, it will not ſoon out of his mind, he will be reflecting upon it, and that cannot be without a high degree of joy and ſatisfaction of Spirit, and he will humbly give unfeigned Thanks to God for making him capable of ſuch a noble and excellent Employment, ſo raviſhing and delicious to himſelf, but eſpecially which will render him ſo benign, uſeful and profitable to the World, and pleaſing to God; for giving him the means of and effectually bringing him to the knowledge and uſe of ſuch an excellent Life; and he will wiſh all men may be ſo happy as to know and partake thereof.

There are Two things among other which make a man very ſenſible of the excellency of this part of his Duty, and conſequently to perceive from thence more ſatisfaction and pleaſure.

The firſt is its compare with other parts of our Duty reſpecting our Neighbour. It ſeems more excellent than that to love ones Neighbour, that is, any rational Creature capable of any good from us. To wiſh well heartily to him, to be charitable, juſt, grateful, compaſſionate, or to ſhew any other Inſtance of Love to him, though it be excellent, yet ſeems as much inferiour to that of our abſolute love to God (not as only good to one, but to all the Univerſe) as our Neighbour, nay all the World are inferiour to God. To wiſh well to or deſire any good thing for God we may not, becauſe it ſuppoſeth ſome good thing abſent or poſſible to be abſent from him; an abſent good is the proper object of *deſire*: but we may will and rejoyce in his infinite happineſs and perfection which he actually poſſeſſeth; we may *will* a preſent good. And this ought to be ſo much more eſteemed (if we compare them) than the love of our Neighbour, as God is capable of more happineſs and felicity than all his Creatures, which is infinitely. All the World is a little thing, a Nothing to him, and his Being and Happineſs conſequently is in-

infinitely to be preferr'd before that of all his Creatures, if they could be oppoſed.

Beſides, it is part of the Nature of God to be infinitely good to all his Creatures; he therefore that loves God as ſuch, muſt needs love all that he hath made too. God's Being and Happineſs infer's that of his Creatures neceſſarily, and is the cauſe thereof, but not on the contrary: wherefore the love of God as having infinitely more excellent Effects is to be preferr'd before the love of all the Creation, if we conſider them diſtinct, and if they could be inconſiſtent one with another; (which they never can be) but much more before the love of any perſon or perſons. And although we are ſaid not only to *will* but to *do* good to our Neighbour, and not to God; yet in truth our proper action is to *will it*; the outward Effect conſequent upon our will is only by God's Power and Action, and we can will it (as hath been juſt now ſaid) equally to both.

Man having naturally a great ſenſe of the infinite Excellency and Perfection of God above all muſt needs have the perſwaſion that he ought to love him above all, and that to love him is a greater Perfection than the love of all the World beſides. And the truth of it is next to the perfection of the love of all the Univerſe, *i. e.* God and all that he hath made together, is the Love of God diſtinctly conſidered.

As for the other parts of our Duty to God, *(viz.)* Honour, Admiration, Dependance, Obedience, *&c.* they are but Inſtrumental Duties to cauſe us to practiſe Univerſal Righteouſneſs, and the great Inſtance Univerſal Love, Love to God and to every Creature, *&c.* but they are much more excellent ones than many other, and ingenerate in us more immediately a greater and higher degree of Holineſs *(*as might be particularly ſhewed*)* and conſequently of Univerſal Love, in which it conſiſts. Some of thoſe perſons who magnifie and commend thoſe Duties which reſpect our Neighbour, eſpecially ſuch as Beneficence, juſtice and honeſty in Dealings and Converſation, Peaceableneſs Obedience, *&c.* may do well to be adviſed whether it proceeds not from ſome ſecret inclination to diminiſh and abate the eſteem of Piety, or of our Duties towards God, becauſe they themſelves do not underſtand the ineffable pleaſure and profit thereof when duly performed, or are leſs ſufficient and apt for them by ſpirituality of mind. They may reflect alſo and obſerve whether it comes not from ſelfiſhneſs, and that in mean and ſmall inſtances of the good things of this worldly Life. It is poſſible for men highly to commend the above-named Virtues, only that the happineſs of their preſent worldly Life might not be diſturbed, that they themſelves

ſelves might attain and enjoy peace, quiet, ſome plentiful or honourable condition of Life. When it is thus, although the Virtues they praiſe are truly excellent and abundantly deſerve it; yet there is no Virtue at all in them, nor any thing more than a mean and little Spirit, *viz.* ſelfiſh and worldly.

The Second thing that makes us more ſenſible of the Excellency of this part of our Duty which is towards God is the unuſualneſs of it, that it is not ſo ordinary a thing. We ſee men oft-times charitable, good-natured, well diſpoſed, compaſſionate, candid, juſt, veracious, and in many Inſtances humble and temperate, and that from a plain and honeſt Conſcience and general Senſe of their Duty, who notwithſtanding more rarely think of God or perform any part of the fore-named Duties to him. The principal Reaſon of which is becauſe moſt mens minds are dull and groſs, by reaſon of their bodily temper and want of Education, and cannot without difficulty perceive any thing of God, or other Spiritual matters, which notwithſtanding by exerciſe and uſage they may much help, God alſo aſſiſting their endeavours.

Theſe, I ſuppoſe, may have been thoſe who have been called by ſome *meer moral* perſons: who, notwithſtanding, are far from being contemptible. For their defect is not

in their will, they loving and desiring to do their Duty universally to God and their Neighbour, which consists in loving them: but in their understanding and memory, they not being so sufficient and fitted to apprehend or retain such purely spiritual natures as God is, and any reasoning concerning things belonging to him. They are often much better persons than those who are more apt to apprehend, remember and talk all day of Points in Divinity or any Religious Matters, and therefore ready to despise them.

The greatest part of men far (nay few are otherwise) are either bad or very inept for more spiritual Objects, and therefore usually much neglect particular Duties towards God. Wherefore when we see men generally so negligent of their Duties to God, especially in Prayer, and many living as if there were none: but take notice that we for our parts are not guilty thereof, but are careful and greatly delight to observe our Duty towards him, we are the more sensible of the excellency of it. What's rare we think it hard to be obtained, and are apt to think it Excellent.

But here we shall do well to have a care of Pride and a mischievous mistake. We must have a care we please not our selves in our superiority to others, as the Pharisee did

to the Publican. We may, if we have not a care, not ſo much pleaſe our ſelves in having done our juſt and reaſonable Duty, as in having done that which ſo few others do, which others for the moſt part do not, and therefore in our ſuperiority to others: whereas as we ſhould pleaſe our ſelves and be well ſatisfied in the diſcharge of ſo excellent a Duty, ſo we ſhould heartily wiſh all others may be able and willing to do the like; not inſult over others as the Phariſee, who thanked God he was not as the Publican, for he faſted twice a Week, *&c.* he was more pleaſed that he was *better* than other men, than that he was *good.* Others falling ſhort of their Duty by neglect may make us more ſenſible of our happineſs in performing ours, becauſe a thing is beſt apprehended when compared with its contrary, but by no means ſhould it make us pleaſe our ſelves in being ſuperiour to them and conſequently in their being bad or negligent.

Further, We muſt have a care of conceiting our ſelves preſently ſo dear and acceptable to God that he muſt needs grant us in particular what we will have, that he muſt do for us what we ſhall deſire, be always of our ſide. We muſt have a care we do not behave our ſelves as if we had obliged God, we for our parts worſhipping, acknowledg-

ing,

ing, honouring and loving of him, when others quite forget and neglect him.

Moreover, It is not all kind of Prayer that is so excellent a part of our Duty, but such as I have formerly described; and yet men are apt for any performance of this Duty (when there is little good in it, and if somewhat good yet somewhat and much more bad) to think highly of and to be greatly pleased with themselves, and that they are very dear and acceptable to God. There is nothing or no great matter in Prayer when a man prays words without understanding and sense, or sense without affection and inclination of Soul. or affectionately without sense, not moved by the truth and excellency (conceived so at least by him) of the matter he prays, but meerly or principally by certain Words and Phrases, with their circumstances of vehemency or lowdness and softness, gravity and acuteness, or the mutual mixtures of these which is called Accent or Tone, or by other external bodily signs of corporeal passions. There is no great matter when men pray in a formal, verbal, heartless, senseless Prayer; and yet men are apt to be very well satisfied with themselves, and to have a very good opinion of themselves for the performance. Or suppose there be in our Prayers great passions to things false or unjust, or that there is vain

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nd falſe ſelf-conceit for a man's own holi-ſs, and God's peculiar love to him, and he anks God for that which is not, or which bad, ſuppoſe that there be Pride, Envy, evenge or other Inſtances of Self-love in ur Prayers, and much more of them than fany thing that is good, ſuch as acknowledg-ment of God's Attributes, and particularly of our dependence upon him by praying to im and thanking him (which are in all rayers that are not meer words.) I ſay, uppoſe our Prayers to be ſuch, (As I doubt th been and is but too frequent) and then hey are ſo far from being any part of our Duty, that they are, generally taken, ſins wicked and abominable things. And yet men meerly for ſome few general good things in them, not taking notice of what's bad, or if they do, yet confeſſing the iniquity of their holy things, and thinking all that is done away and pardoned in Chriſt, the good only remaining, though they have the ſame temper ſtill from whence theſe bad things ſprung, may conceit themſelves to have per-formed a moſt excellent part of their Duty. And this principally, becauſe it is extraor-dinary, few men do ſo much, moſt men quite neglect God, take little notice of him, make any acknowledgment of him. And hence further may they believe themſelves in general very extraordinary excellent per-ſons,

ſons, and that without doubt they are highly in God's favour, moſt precious and acceptable to him, *his praying people*, and conſequently that he will do any thing for them and for their ſakes.

Theſe Abuſes and Miſtakes I have mentioned that they might be prevented. Be it ſure, that when a man reflects upon his having prayed to God, and is very well ſatisfied and pleaſed therewith, it be nothing but what is really good that pleaſeth him. Not, for Example, his ſingularity or ſuperiority to other men: but the ſpirituality of his mind, and the well-diſpoſedneſs of his Soul, his true love to Goodneſs Univerſally, Hatred of Sin, Love and Thankfulneſs to God, Honour, Reverence, Obedience, Faith, Dependence and Truſt in Him, the actual Exerciſe of theſe, and the temper of mind from whence they proceed and to which they tend. Let him be ſure alſo that theſe things were in his praying to God, not in general highly pleaſing himſelf in having prayed when there was little of them: but indeed much more of ſuch worthleſs or wicked things I have above mentioned. The being thus well aſſured of the goodneſs of our Prayers as it will in good mens minds raiſe up great delight and ſatisfaction, ſo alſo it *ought*, that we may be encouraged ſtill to go on in the performance

of ſo excellent a Duty whereby we ſhall ſtill be rendred better, more able and diſpoſed by being good to ſerve and pleaſe God, and to do good in the World. And we ought to give hearty thanks to God that our Souls are ſo well tempered, as to be pleaſed and delighted with ſuch things.

SECT. X.

IV. PRaying procures Delight, Joy and Satisfaction of Mind by God's ſpecial immediate Influence. God may no doubt in our praying to him ſome ways perfect all the Operations of our Souls. He may bring things either unknown or known before to our minds; that is, reveal or ſuggeſt, he may cauſe us to attend to perceive and underſtand things more clearly and ſtrongly, that is, illuminate our minds; he may alſo excite and ſtrengthen our Love to our Duty, Sorrow for Sin, Love to any particular Duty, Love to himſelf, Honour, Reverence, Humble Addreſs and Dependence, Faith, ſubmiſſive and obedientiall Reſolution. So likewiſe ſurely he may excite and diffuſe through our Souls, Joy, Delight, Satisfaction from the Exerciſe of all theſe immediately, more than would otherwiſe be without this his eſpecial immediate Action or Influence.

And

And that God doth do thus, the Scripture plainly affirms, and Reason it self (in so much that Philosophers have taught it) would conclude it probable as well for other reasons, as particularly to draw and encourage us to the more frequent and vivid Exercise of these excellent Operations of our Souls, of these Graces in us. And 'tis this which makes that which is called *Communion*, or rather *Union with God* in Prayer compleat. For to have God the Object of the Operations of our Souls, to direct our Souls to God; and then for God again to make our Souls the Object of his Action or Influence (and the more of it, as there is in the more especial and immediate influence of God, the more the Communion) is or may very properly be called *Union or Conversation of our Souls with God*, and is a thing easily understood by all, but more felt by some men who are truly called godly and holy men. The Union between two spiritual substances cannot be understood to be any other than by the mutual intercourse of operations, and is much more really so than that which is between two bodys.

Xenoph. *Sen.* *Cicero.*

And here we may easily understand that this Conversation with God is not only confined to Prayer, but may be referr'd to all our Lives, in any part of which we may direct

direct the Operations of our Souls to him (as when we do any thing in obedience to his Commands) and he may again have immediate influence upon us (as to ſuggeſt and ſtrengthen us in our Obedience) any the ways before mentioned. And the frequenter and more vigorous theſe things are in man's Life, the more he may be ſaid to have *Communion or Union with God* in this Life, or to converſe with God. And thus much for the Second ſort of Benefits of Praying.

SECT. XI.

III. THe Third ſort of general good Effects or Benefits of Praying, are thoſe which are Helps and Means both of our Goodneſs and Comfort, of which I ſhall at preſent name but Two, *viz.* Spirituality and Enlargedneſs of Soul.

1. *Spirituality.* By which I mean ſuch a temper of Soul whereby a man is apt to apprehend and be affected with Intellectual or Spiritual Objects, whether Abſolute as the Nature and Properties of all Spiritual Beings, ſuch as our own Souls, Angels, God himſelf; Or Relative, as all the Relations and Habitudes of things one to another, ſuch

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as Cauſe and Effect, Contrariety, Similitude, Connexion and Repugnancy, *&c.* the ſucceſſive apprehenſion of which two laſt is called *Reaſoning*. It is manifeſt, That the Objects about which our minds are converſant in Prayer, are chiefly thoſe of the firſt ſort, God and his Attributes, our Souls and their ſeveral Perfections and Imperfections, as Ignorance and Knowledge, Errour and Truth, Vices and Virtues, or Sins and Graces, *&c.* Now by frequent Exerciſe and Uſage of our ſelves to Prayer, theſe Objects become familiar to us, and ſuch as we readily and clearly conceive and apprehend, and which really and ſtrongly affect us: whereas thoſe men who never Pray or otherwiſe uſe their minds to them are only ſenſual and corporeal, or carnally minded, that is, ſuch who can only conceive and are affected with ſenſible things, and ſomewhat of reaſoning ſometimes dully enough too about them: but ſtrangely inept to ſpiritual things, blind and ſenſleſs in them.

But further, This Spirituality of Mind is manifeſtly a great preparation of Soul for Virtue and Goodneſs, becauſe they are ſpiritual things. It fits our Souls to apprehend their Nature, to ſee their Beauty and Excellency, the natural neceſſary Efficiency or Cauſality that is in them of the Happineſs of the World, which can be diſcovered

in no other thing: and consequently really to approve, honour, admire and love them. Moreover the very same temper of Soul, whether from the subtilty and calmness of the Spirits, or any other cause, which disposeth to Spirituality disposeth also to Benignity or Love, which when it is universal and impartial is the only Instance and Subject of Virtue and Goodness. Finally, The Pleasure and Joy which the Soul perceives from her Conversation with Spiritual Objects is far more profound and piercing, more lasting and more frequent, being more in our own power than that from sensible and corporeal ones is, that which besides Revelation, the Experience not only of virtuous and holy Souls, but even of Contemplative persons, who have made tryal of both with equal advantages, hath always confirmed, and sincerely declared to the rest of the sensual World. The first of which do very heartily complain of and groan under the unhappy circumstances of this fleshly Life which so much hinders them from the enjoyment of those nobler and sweeter delights, and for that Reason (among others greater) full often breath out their thanks to God for the discovery and assurance of the heavenly Life hereafter, and their secret welcomes of the approaching time thereof; whither steals from

them many a privy glance, where is fixed many a yearning look.

II. The Second good Effect or Benefit of this laſt ſort from Prayer, is an Enlargedneſs or Greatneſs of Soul. By which I mean that temper of Soul whereby it is ſufficient and fitted to apprehend and be affected with great Objects; to underſtand, contemplate, will, deſire, love, be pleaſed with, purſue and endeavour after them; or in one word, to converſe with them. By the greatneſs of Objects, I mean their having great good Effects, or a capacity and ſufficiency, or ſome cauſality for ſuch: all which good Effects indeed are either immediately or mediately nothing but *happineſs*: they are either that in the end immediately, or the ſame in the means mediately. All goodneſs is either the goodneſs of the end, which is pleaſurable good, or the good of the means to obtain that end, which is profitable good; and indeed this laſt is nothing but the firſt in the means to obtain it. So that all Good is nothing but Happineſs. But to leave this ſmall but very important digreſſion; The greatneſs of the goodneſs of Objects, or the happineſs of which they are the cauſe, is meaſured only by three things, *viz.* its Intention, Extention and Duration. Thoſe Objects

jects therefore are the greateſt which are or are moſt the cauſe of the moſt intenſe, the moſt univerſal or extended as to ſubjects, and the moſt during happineſs, of which there are infinite degrees; The higheſt of which is that being infinite in all perfection and happineſs which we call God, who formally or cauſally contains all things. According to the ſeveral degrees of this good which each man minds, purſues and converſeth withal, is his Greatneſs, Nobleneſs, Excellency (or what words are uſual among men to expreſs the confuſed notion hereof) to be judged and eſteemed. He is the nobleſt and greateſt ſoul of all who minds and purſues perpetually the greateſt good of the whole Univerſe in theſe three Reſpects, of Intention, Extention, Duration: that in all other things; or all other things as parts, or more generally means thereof, and therefore ſpiritual good as much as may be, being the greateſt in reſpect of its intention; univerſal good, or that of the whole, as the greateſt in reſpect of extenſion, and the moſt publick indeed; eternal good laſtly, as the greateſt in reſpect of duration. On the contrary, he is the meaneſt and baſeſt ſoul who minds and purſues only perſonal, ſenſible and preſent good.

It is manifeſt that in Prayer, as it is before deſcribed, the objects with which the Soul

converſeth are of the greateſt and nobleſt ſort, and that by frequent uſage of her ſelf to ſuch converſation ſhe gets a habit thereof, ſo that ſhe doth with eaſe and delight ſo employ her ſelf: and if this fleſhly Life would permit her, ſhe would ſoon make it her conſtant and perpetual entertainment.

Further, It is alike plain and evident how this greatneſs of Soul is the cauſe of Virtue or Goodneſs, and of Comfort or Joy. For Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs, Holineſs, Virtue (all ſignifie the ſame principal thing with ſome ſmall difference) in its greateſt degree is nothing but the ſincereſt, ſtrongeſt, conſtanteſt, habitual inclination and bent of will to the *rectitude of our wills or actions*, which is only to be found in having the greateſt good of the whole Univerſe, taking in God himſelf for the *ultimate* object or end of our wills, and renouncing and quitting that of any *part*, and therefore of *our ſelves*. It is therefore nothing but a preference of the moſt Publick and Univerſal Good before that of any part, and therefore before *our own*. And contrariwiſe, Vice and Sin is the preference of the good of any *part*, and almoſt always *our own perſonal good* before that of the *whole*, which is the moſt *Univerſal* and *Publick*. It is the having *that* the ultimate object and end of all our wills, and neg-

neglecting or refuſing *this*. Holineſs and Virtue therefore are great and noble and excellent things, which tend to an infinite good: and if compared they are as much greater than Sin or Vice, as infinite Extenſion (if there can be any ſuch thing) is bigger than a ſingle Atome. The ſoul conſequently which is inclined to and aſpires after the greateſt and moſt noble objects muſt needs be ſo far prepared to have the higheſt honour, the ardenteſt love, the keeneſt deſire, the moſt intenſe and raviſhing joy and delight in the moſt ſincere, generous and conſtant Virtue; and muſt perfectly both contemn and hate all Vice and Sin, as the moſt mean, baſe and ſordid thing. The ſame greatneſs or largeneſs of Soul diſpoſeth us infinitely to prefer one ſort of our own perſonal good, *viz.* the favour of God, as our moſt comprehenſive good, and particularly Eternal happineſs, which he hath promiſed as the Reward of Holineſs and Virtue, before another ſort thereof, *viz.* the Temptations to Sin and Vice, at longeſt the momentany pleaſures of this preſent Life, and utterly to deſpiſe them in compare with the other, and conſequently to endeavour and purſue after Virtue, and to ſlight and ſcorn all Vice. It is certain, That it is nothing but Ignorance or a pityable and contemptible littleneſs and ſtingineſs of Soul in the greateſt

Huffs of the Age, whatever they may pretend to generoſity, which expoſeth them to Vice and Wickedneſs, and makes them ſo eaſily to neglect or deſpiſe all the Laws and Rewards of Virtue and true Religion; either they are not able to conceive things beyond the Mud-walls of their own Cottage, or they are ſo ſtuffed and dryed with its Reeks and Smoaks as never to deſire them. Nay, when no leſs than Eternal Felicity is propoſed and profered to them, they are no more moved with it than a *Bedlam*-Sot is with the offer of a Kingdom; or ſometimes they laugh at it, like one of thoſe poor merry Fools and prefer their own naſty Cell before it. One would think the dulleſt Soul ſhould hardly forbear to enquire after it, and be willing it ſhould be true, or at leaſt without any prejudice againſt it, endeavour to be ſatisfied whether it be ſo or no.

Laſtly, Nothing is more manifeſt than that the greater and nobler the objects are with which our mind converſeth, the fuller and mightier is our joy and pleaſure. Surely we cannot think that Boys have as great pleaſure in Conquering at Cob-Nutt, as a great Captain hath in ſubduing a Kingdom; or which is better, That a fond Child hath as great a joy and delight in ſaving the Life of its little Animal Play-fellow, as *Abraham* would have had in prevailing with God for the ſaving

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of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* from a miſerable Deſtruction, if there had been found therein but Ten Righteous Perſons. There is infinite more difference between the things that men ordinarily entertain their thoughts and purſuits withal, and thoſe which the Soul converſeth withal in ſuch Prayers as have been before deſcribed.

And ſo I have given an account of ſome of the general Heads of the good Effects or Benefits of Praying to God, which I have hitherto proved by Reaſon and Teſtimony and Experience of all good men.

And now I deſire men would prove it one way more, and that is, by their own experience, or elſe diſprove it. Make we tryal of it our ſelves, and that for ſome time together; for the Effects may not preſently follow: take we ſome time, begin now to do it, to pray to God diſcreetly and affectionately with a holy, pure and innocent heart, in publick, private, ſecret; ſee whether we do not grow better upon it. Pray to him heartily and aſſiduouſly in ſecret for ſtrength to mortifie any Luſt, thy Pride, thy Revenge, thy Envy, thy Wrath, thy Injuſtice, thy Covetouſneſs, thy Vain-glory, thy Uncleanneſs or Laſciviouſneſs, thy Intemperance, and a Thouſand other Luſts which may be troubleſome and importunate to us ſo far as we are good, or to the Divine

and Regenerate Nature within us. Pray to him for Univerſal Holineſs, Love to himſelf, Charity, Humility, Purity and Spirituality of Mind; for his forbearance, for his Pardon. Make thy report after ſome time, I fear nothing more than a Temptation to boaſt too much of thy Succeſs. And as for the pleaſure of it, ſtep ſometimes into thy Cloſet, or any retired place, deſire of God firſt to diſpoſe thy Mind that the Meditation and Action of thy Soul may be ſuch as may be acceptable to him, ſet thy ſelf to make Acknowledgments of his infinite Excellencies and Perfections, and the Inſtances thereof to all his Creation, and in particular to thy ſelf, in making, preſerving, providing for thee, and beſtowing upon thee the good things of thy Soul and Body; ſuch as Knowledge, eſpecially of himſelf and thy ſelf, of thy preſent and future States and Conditions, any Goodneſs or Virtue, that thou art not the moſt villanous and wicked perſon, devoid of all ſenſe of thy Duty, given up to all Sin and Wickedneſs, the means afforded ſtill of being yet wiſer and better, God's forbearance, forgiveneſs in caſe of Repentance, preſent Peace, Comfort, Joy in well-doing, the proviſion of Heaven and Eternal Life hereafter when thy Eyes are cloſed and thou art no more an Inhabitant of this World, thy Health, Strength plenty

of

of Food, Rayment, Habitation, all Conveniencies of this Life in order to a good and happy Life here and hereafter. And not only make bare acknowledgments of theſe things: but heartily love and thank God for them, honour and admire him with all thy might and underſtanding, firmly believe him to have been, to be now, and that he always will be thy beſt Friend, if thou be not thine own hindrance; Ask heartily God's Pardon for offending him and ſinning againſt the Eternal Laws of Righteouſneſs, drop an unfeigned Tear, breath out an unconſtrained Sigh, chide thy ſelf, beſeech God's Grace more than thy Life never to do ſo any more, reſolve to uſe all the inherent ſtrength thou haſt; come then and tell what thou findeſt, how thou likeſt.

Once more, When thou wouldſt have any thing, make thy Caſe known, propound it to God, beſeech him to give it thee ſo far as it is juſt only, leave thy ſelf and thy requeſt with God, becauſe he is wiſe and juſt, examine and amend what is amiſs in thy ſelf, that thou mighteſt not be the cauſe why it is not juſt for God to give it thee, let us know how this reliſheth and what followeth. Say ſometimes ſuch things as theſe with the devout and holy *Pſalmiſt*, *I love the Lord becauſe he hath heard my Voice and my Supplication*, or *becauſe he hath delivered my*

my Soul from death, (that is, he hath ſaved my Life in ſuch a danger, or ſickneſs ſuppoſe) *mine eyes from tears*, (that is, he hath removed from me or prevented thoſe Evils which would have ſore grieved me) *and my feet from falling*, (that is, he hath kept my mind upright and cheerful from dejectedneſs and deſpondency, or he hath kept me in that good condition of Life from which I was in danger of having fallen or of being deprived of it) *the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me, what ſhall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the Cup of Salvation* (the uſual part of the Sacrifice of Thankſgiving) I will ſhew my ſelf publickly thankful, *and call upon the Name of the Lord*, or Worſhip him. *O Lord, truly I am thy Servant, I am thy Servant.* Pſal. 116.

Say further ſometimes, *Great is the Lord and greatly to be praiſed, and his greatneſs is unſearchable: The Lord is gracious and full of compaſſion, ſlow to anger and of great Mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. All thy works ſhall praiſe thee O Lord, and thy Saints ſhall bleſs thee. Oh happy is he who hath the God of* Jacob *for his help, whoſe hope is in Jehovah the Lord his God, who made Heaven and Earth, the Sea and all that therein is; He who telleth the number of the Stars, and calleth them all by their Names, who is of great Power and his Underſtanding*

ſtanding is infinite. Pſalms 145, 146, 147. Make we tryal, I ſay, our ſelves, ſee we things with our own eyes, confirm or confute all by our own experience. Let us not think it a thing not worthy our trouble to be ſatisfied in, for it is worthy of our greateſt pains. Either we believe all that hath been ſaid concerning theſe Excellent Uſes of Praying, or we do not: if we do not, as I ſaid, try we our ſelves whether our Nature is not capable thereof, and God will not aſſiſt us; for this is the beſt way of proof. If we do believe it without trying, then do we accordingly. If we do believe this to be true, and yet do not practiſe, it muſt needs be a ſign we are both bad and fooliſh, that we have no mind to be made good or better, no nor liſt through lazineſs or ſlavery to be made happier; or becauſe we cannot have the comfort and pleaſure of Praying without the profit of being engaged to be good, we'l part with that rather than be good and leave our bad Courſes or any Sin we love; in which as we are wicked, ſo we are ſuch Fools for our ſelves as if when we have a decrepit and infirm Body we ſhould be afraid it ſhould be made more ſound and ſtrong whereby we might be more uſeful to the World, and have the conſtant pleaſure of a clear Health. And ſo I have perfected this Fourth Head, namely the great

Benefits

CHAP. V.

SECT. I.

V. THE Fifth general Head is Directions for Praying; theſe ſhall be of two ſorts.

1. To inform or remember our ſelves of the due qualifications of a Prayer, what they are.

2. To ſuggeſt ſome means to obtain theſe ſaid qualifications.

Again, The firſt ſort, or the due qualifications are of two ſorts likewiſe.

1. Thoſe concerning the *things* contained in a Prayer.

2. Thoſe concerning the *ſigns* of thoſe things.

Thoſe qualifications again concerning the *things* contained in a Prayer are only likewiſe of two ſorts.

1. Thoſe that appertain to the *objects* or *ſenſe* of a Prayer,

2. Thoſe

2. Thoſe which appertain to the *Actions* or (to uſe the moſt fit general Term I know) any *Affections* (by which I mean not only the paſſions) of Soul uſed in a Prayer, ſuch as I have before reckoned up and largely diſcourſed of: and which (briefly, only to rehearſe them) are,

1. Acknowledgment of God's excellent Attributes, his infinite Perfections, together with the affections of Soul conſequent, ſuch as Admiration, Honour, Reverence, Fear, Love, Faith, Hope or Confidence, Obediential Reſolution, *&c.*

2. Confeſſion of our Sins.

3. Profeſſion of our future Obedience, in which two are included many more particular Actions, as Reflection, Comparing our Actions with our Duty, Acknowledgment or Confeſſion ſtrictly ſo called, Accuſation, Condemnation, Grief and Sorrow for Sin, Watchfulneſs againſt it, Reſolution to do ſo no more.

4. Thankfulneſs or Love to God for his Benefits to us.

5. A Propoſal, Recital, Explication of our Wants, their number, their greatneſs. As alſo of the reaſons and grounds of our deſires, of their importunateneſs, *i. e.* of their earneſtneſs and frequency.

And then *(6.)* Our expreſs Petitions and Deſires.

Again,

Again, and laſtly, The due qualifications of the ſigns uſed in ſo Praying, both of the *Objects* and *Actions*, or *Operations* of our Souls are,

1. Thoſe of Words or Speech, which are always uſed as ſigns of our immediate conceptions and actions of Soul, when we pray with others in their name, and ſo as they may joyn with us. They may alſo be uſed in ſecret Prayer for the more ſtrong and expreſs excitation in our ſelves both of ſenſe and of the operations of our Souls, Perceptions, Affections, Reſolutions. I ſay, they may where there is no worſe conſequence than that is a good one (as ſeeming to be or a temptation to be vain-glorious) be uſed by us in our ſecret or retired Prayers. But even when we do not in our ſecret Prayers pronounce them with our Lips, yet they are in our Imagination, and we near always ſignifie by them unto our ſelves our conceit of things, or Ideas at leaſt, if not our affections.

Further, Theſe Words or Speech are ſometimes the ſigns *only* of things or ſenſe or Ideas in our minds, *and not* of any other operations of our Souls, as in Mathematicks, (ſo may it be in any other part of knowledge) where men write and ſpeak purely to teach and inform. Sometimes again, eſpecially with ſome properties belonging

to

to them (as their Gravity, Acuteneſs, Lowdneſs, Lowneſs, Swiftneſs, Slowneſs, Equality, Inequality, Poſition and Site) they *only* ſignifie other operations or affections of our Souls, eſpecially our Paſſions, and not our Ideas or conceipts. But for the moſt part (both when written and pronounced) they ſignifie both together. It is very rare but that they indicate and ſignifie together with the ſenſe ſome quality or action of mind in the writer or ſpeaker: and eſpecially the Paſſions, as in ſentences of Admiration, yea and of Truſt and Confidence and Deſire, *&c.* frequent in the *Pſalms*, nor indeed is any diſcourſe acceptable to the generality of men without them. For example, *Where are thy loving kindneſſes of old? Haſt thou forgotten to be gracious? Haſt thou caſt us off for ever?* Great deſires are here ſignified as well as ſenſe. *Oh that the ſalvation of* Iſrael *were come out of* Sion. *Pſalm* 14. *Verſe* 7. Ardent and earneſt deſire is here ſignified by words and their order and poſition. *Oh let the wickedneſs of the wicked come to an end. Pſalm* 7. *Verſe* 9. And *oh that men would praiſe the Lord for his goodneſs. Pſalm* 107. *Verſe* 8. are the ſame. *Oh how I love thy Law! Pſalm* 119. *Verſe* 97. ſignifies Admiration at the greatneſs of his love, as well as the ſenſe or thing, that he did love God's Law. Repetition of words

ſignifies

ſignifies not only the ſenſe of ſuch words, but alſo ſome paſſion or ſome great degree thereof. As *Pſalm* 116. *Verſe* 16. *O Lord, truly I am thy ſervant, I am thy ſervant the Son of thy Hand-maid*, &c. ſignifies not only the ſenſe, that the Pſalmiſt was God's Servant, but alſo the Paſſion of Joy that he was ſo, and of Hope becauſe he was ſo. And *ſave now I beſeech thee O Lord, O Lord I beſeech thee ſend now proſperity.* (*Pſalm* 118. *Verſe* 25.) Earneſtneſs and greatneſs of Deſire is here ſignified. So again for Example, When a man confeſſeth that he hath been or is the *greateſt of Sinners*, or the *leaſt of Saints*, or the like; theſe words do not or ought not to ſignifie the ſuperlative degree as other words may ſometimes do; but only that they have been once great ſinners, and are but little good in the poſitive degree. And moreover, the great Paſſion of Grief and Hatred for and of Sin, and of undervaluing and contempt of themſelves for being ſo very bad or little good. Many other Expreſſions in Prayers and other performances when men are hot and affectionated may truly be ſo interpreted, though oft-times the perſons themſelves do not obſerve it, but will defend the preciſe meaning and ſenſe of the words when ſpoken without paſſion to be always true. But,

2. Theſe ſigns either of *Senſe or Objects*

or of *Operations* or *Affections* of our Souls are other poſtures or geſtures of ſome parts of the body: ſuch as are thoſe of the head, as ſhaking it, which is a ſign of deſire or ſadneſs; of the whole Countenance as the parts thereof being compoſed and ſteady, *i.e.* which uſually ſignifies Attention, *&c.* Of the eyes particularly, whoſe lifting up uſually ſignifies deſire, thankfulneſs, approbation, admiration, *&c.* Of the whole body, as ſtanding up, which may ſignifie approbation, more uſually attention. The ſigns which ſignifie Approbation and Attention uſually ſignifie too Reſpect, Eſteem, Reverence. The lifting up the hands ordinarily ſignifies deſire. Kneeling uſually ſignifies Reverence, Reſpect, Submiſſion. Some certain poſtures of the Countenance ſignifie Grief and Sadneſs, ſome Joy, ſome Truſt and Confidence, *&c.* for there are infinite variety. Poſtures and Geſtures may be alſo the ſigns of ſenſe too or of our meaning, as we ſee it is in dumb perſons, but thoſe to whom God hath granted the uſe of words and ſpeech very rarely uſe them for that purpoſe.

We begin at the firſt, *viz.* the due Qualifications of the *Senſe or Objects*, or the things about which our minds are converſant in Prayer. Some of which are theſe:

1. The Firſt is the truth of them. We

are to take care that that which is capable thereof be true. All things that are the ſenſe or matter of our Prayers, beſides that which is the proper matter of Petition or Deſire may be falſe or true. The matter or objects of our deſire indeed cannot, becauſe they are all of them, as ſo conſidered, ſimple not complex things in ſuch manner as Propoſitions are, in which only there is that truth I now mean. For Example, In acknowledgment of the Divine Perfections, we muſt have a care that what we acknowledge to be in God, be really a pure perfection, and implies neceſſarily no imperfection or defect in the leaſt, and therefore that it is really in him. Thus when we make an acknowledgment of God's abſolute Power and Sovereignty of doing whatſoever he willeth and pleaſeth, we muſt have a care of thinking he can by his own intrinſick Power, or that it is in his Nature to determine himſelf contrary to the Laws of Righteouſneſs, or Univerſal Goodneſs, which is all one. As for Inſtance, That he can, or that there is any capacity in his moſt perfect Nature to will all his Creatures to be miſerable, and to make them for that purpoſe; nay, or to will any number of them; nay, any one of them *abſolutely* and *ultimately* to be ſo; nay, or the leaſt evil to any of them without any further reſpect to any other good,

good, but only that he pleaſeth himſelf therein; this is contrary to Reaſon and expreſs Revelation. It is true, there is no ſuperiour cauſe to God's Will or his active Power that makes him to be good, or reſtrains him from making any of his Creatures unhappy or miſerable; (we ſhould be miſtaken again if we thought ſo) but we neither ought nor can conceive, if we attend to the Nature of God and Perfection, that it is poſſible ever for him to will *abſolutely* and *ultimately* the leaſt evil or miſery of his Creatures; his Will can never be ſo diſpoſed, it is not in his Nature, to will ſo cannot pleaſe him. That which I conceive the beſt diſpoſed men mean confuſedly and are not offended with when they acknowledge God's Soveraignty ſo unlimitedly, as that he can do what he will with his innocent Creatures, and either immediately though ſuch, or mediately, firſt contriving a neceſſity of ſinning, throw them into Hell if he pleaſeth, is, that there is no ſuperiour cauſe to his own Will why he doth not ſo; which is true: not that it is poſſible for him ever ſo to will or to be pleaſed therewith: That even the *due Relations of our Actions to their Objects* or their *Juſtice* or *Righteouſneſs* is ſomething, and therefore made by God or dependent upon his Will, for all things muſt have his Will or active Power to be the

Cauſe: But then we cannot conceive his Nature ſuch as ever to have willed contrary, or not to have willed theſe Relations, not to have willed that which is juſt and right. There have been both of the moſt prophane and of the greateſt Religioniſts but miſtaken who have, I think, entertained theſe falſe and moſt miſchievous Opinions concerning God.

So on another hand, in the acknowledgment of the Divine Goodneſs, men may have a conceit and acknowledge that God is ſo good that he will make all men happy, and therefore paſs over all their ſins though never ſo great and heinous, numerous and many; that he will not puniſh them neither here nor hereafter; and this though they do not repent, and their minds and natures are not changed at all, or very ſlightly. They ſay they are ſinners, but God, they hope, will forgive them, for God is merciful, as they uſe to expreſs it. This is a very miſchievous falſhood, and implies him even not to be Univerſally good to all his Creation, not to do the greateſt good to it: for he cannot be ſo, unleſs he reſtrain ſometimes wickedneſs and ſinful miſchievous Purpoſes and Reſolutions of Will, and put a difference, as to Happineſs, between the Righteous and the Wicked ſometime and in ſome meaſure or other, according as ſeems beſt

beſt to his infinite Wiſdom. This alſo is contrary to Reaſon and the expreſs revealed Will of God.

So again, Thoſe who may acknowledge the Divine Tenderneſs and peculiar Love to them and to ſome certain others, that he will not ſee any ſin in them, and will not puniſh them in the leaſt for it, but that they are peculiarly deſtined to an unconceivable Glory and Felicity in another World notwithſtanding they live in their Sins, and are no better than others, and are very well content ſo to do and be: who ſay further, that God hath provided and found out a way to excuſe them from actual obedience to his Laws, and from puniſhment in caſe of conſtant failure without any amendment: that they indeed have very corrupt hearts, but God for Chriſt's ſake will pardon all. Theſe perſons make God and Chriſt the worſt Patrons of ſin, the moſt unrighteous, the moſt partial, to bear with and pardon it in a few whom he pleaſeth, but to puniſh it in all the reſt with the greateſt ſeverity. Nothing more repugnant to Reaſon and Scripture in *Rom.* 2.

In Confeſſion in like manner we muſt have the like care, and as near as we can ſay nothing but what we know to be certainly true. Wherefore we muſt have a care that we do not confeſs that we deſerve

puniſhment in ſuch things which are not ſins, nor that we are guilty in thoſe things which really are ſins, when we are not. Nor on the contrary perhaps excuſe our ſelves, or think our ſelves innocent or good when we are bad, think thoſe things no ſins, nay, very good actions which are bad ones. That which may often be in thoſe which are done with pretended or ſome little real zeal confuſedly for the glory of God mixed with much more or other undue ſelfiſh ends and unlawful appetites. Nor muſt we acquit, flatter, connive at our ſelves, and think our ſelves not guilty of any ſins, and it may be thank God for it too, when we are; being either ignorant and forgetful of our ſelves, or wilfully vainly conceited. The greateſt part of the World are very preſumptuous and conceited generally of their own innocency (though they may ſometimes in words only or very ſlightly ſay they are ſinners) inſomuch that if you ſhould enquire of them what they have been or how they have lived, they'l tell you that no man can ſay any harm by them, and they know nothing amiſs they thank God by themſelves, they hardly know one ſin by themſelves or one bad action to confeſs, or they muſt ſtudy upon it or be put in mind of ſomething or other; whence they conclude themſelves very innocent, and take it for granted and

act

act accordingly as if it really were ſo, and God knew as little by them as they do by themſelves; when perhaps they have rarely done any good action, and they have little good in them. If they ſhould be remembred of their Wrath, Revenge, Pride, Envy, Conceit and Diſobedience, Fraud, Deceit, Injuſtice, Violence, Sacriledge, Luſt and Intemperance, their neglect of God and their Duty towards him, nay their averſation from, hatred or contempt of Pious Performances they will either deny or excuſe or juſtifie themſelves therein. Theſe are the far greateſt number.

But we may find ſome too on the other hand, who are ſo melancholy, fearful, and timorous, or angry and diſcontented with themſelves, that they are very apt to think thoſe things ſins in themſelves and to accuſe and condemn themſelves for them, which are not, but only defects of knowledge or prudence; when their principles were very right and innocent, and they uſed as much or more care ſometimes to do what they intended then they ought. Nay, ſome there may be who may think thoſe things ſins which are their material duty, or they ought in prudence and wiſdom to have done. As when any perſon notwithſtanding the ſtirring or tumultuating of any Luſts reſiſted, diſapproved, comes to the Sacrament, deſirous

heartily to be better and ſtronger againſt them, and yet thinks he hath done amiſs in coming before his heart was better, when this was his duty. Theſe ſame timorous and diſcontented perſons alſo are apt to think themſelves guilty of ſome faults when they are not, or more then they are, and to take notice of what's bad and not what's good in themſelves. They take notice of the frequent aſſaults of their exceſſive and immoderate Appetites and Luſts, and ſometimes of their being overcome, and not at all of their diſapprobation, diſlike, reſiſtance, repelling and overcoming them; the latter of which is as effectual a means of encouraging, preſerving and ſtrengthening us in goodneſs as the former.

So alſo men may miſtake in their Confeſſion concerning Original Sin, if not rightly informed, as that we are guilty of *Adam*'s perſonal Sin, and ſo deſerve Eternal Damnation therefore: whereas the utmoſt that ſeems to be taught us by Scripture, Reaſon and Experience (which indeed is a great and a ſad deal) is, that it may ſeem juſt to God, (or for the Univerſal Good) to conſtitute ſuch Laws of Nature, that Children by the Mediation of their Bodys from their Parents may be born with *inordinate* and *immoderate* appetites or inclinations, or with inclinations to ſome objects *abſolutely* for them-

themſelves and *ſtronger* than that to *holineſs or righteouſneſs*; in which is the nature of *Sin*. Theſe *inordinate* and *immoderate* appetites or inclinations being by Laws of Nature from certain temper or diſpoſition of our bodys which is communicated from our Parents, may very well be called Original, or Birth-Sin, as it is in our Church-Articles. But all this though it be a very great Calamity to Children, yet cannot be ſaid to be their Puniſhment, becauſe no ſin in them is ſuppoſed to have preceded; but it is the Puniſhment of their Parents and of their Firſt-Parents who have ſinned, to whom they are ſo related as to be looked upon by them and others as part of themſelves, and whom their Evil or Calamity ſeen or foreſeen really doth affect. Nay further, Theſe *inordinate* and *immoderate* Appetites or habitual Luſts or evil Concupiſcences do certainly make it juſt for God to place ſuch Souls in whom they are in ſome ſuitable ſtate of imperfection and unhappineſs ſometime or in ſome degree or other beſt known to his infinite Wiſdom, if they be not removed or taken away, as ſome think they are in Infants by Baptiſm. But all this ſtill is no *Puniſhment* to Children either for *Adam's* or any other's perſonal Tranſgreſſion.

The neglect of a *Judaical* obſervation of the Lord's day hath been, and, I ſuppoſe, is

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ſtill amongſt ſome even very good perſons one of the moſt frequently or zealouſly confeſſed ſins: That they have ſpoke their own words and thought their own thoughts any time within the four and twenty hours; that is, as they interpet it, any words or thoughts concerning any worldly Affair (though it be hard to fix the bounds of worldly and religious) which in it ſelf might be hightly uſeful to ones ſelf and to others, and therefore lawful, nay commanded on another day: and this becauſe they look upon the *Jewiſh* Sabbath only tranſlated to another day by our Lord or his Apoſtles with the addition of the Commemoration of our Lord's Reſurrection. The Command concerning the Obſervation of which *Jewiſh* Sabbath they eſteem Moral (by which they mean that it is of perpetual obligation) except where God himſelf hath altered it, as they think he hath in reſpect of the day. In all which I think there are many miſtakes, As,

1. That the *Jews* themſelves were forbidden for the entire ſpace of twenty four hours of their Sabbath all thoughts and words, nay actions themſelves which were not the immediate worſhip of God internal or external, or very nearly relating thereunto. As for Actions it is not to be doubted but that firſt thoſe which might be neceſ-

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ſary to make them ſpend a greater part of that time in the immediate worſhip of God with more vigour and fervency were never forbidden; and therefore thoſe which were for the beſt refreſhment of the body with food, and thoſe which were for diverſion ſometimes; which to ſome perſons might neceſſarily take up a good part of their time: ſuch as walking and talking about innocent or uſeful affairs of Life, and interpoſing theſe ſo much as might make them fitter for the commanded Worſhip of God, and that which their own prudence might add in publick, private or ſecret. Nor,

2. Is it more to be doubted that thoſe actions were never forbidden which were of greater good effect juſt at that time and in thoſe circumſtances (and many ſuch there may be which muſt be left to mens ſincere prudence) than the immediate Worſhip of God. As for Example, A Man's pulling his Neighbour's, or his own Ox or Aſs or Sheep out of a Ditch, where they would certainly periſh: (It is our Saviour's own Inſtance.) How much more to ride many miles Poſt, more than many of their Sabbath days Journey, to ſave a Man's Life ready to periſh by ſome Diſeaſe, or by violent aſſault of wicked Murtherers? And as for words and thoughts they had in this reſpect ſtill more liberty. For abundance of actions and

and otherwiſe very uſeful and good would be inconſiſtent with and indiſpoſe a man to the immediate Worſhip of God, the words or thoughts concerning which for a ſmall time may not ; but clean contrary conveniently and fitly divert or refreſh a man and be the cauſe of his better performance thereof. The place in *Iſaiah*, the 58. which hath been uſually quoted to this purpoſe is, *If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath from doing thy pleaſure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honourable, and ſhalt honour him, not doing thine own ways nor finding thine own pleaſure nor ſpeaking thine own words.* Where firſt the words *from doing thy pleaſure on my holy day* ſignifie and mean in general their doing every thing they liſted and pleaſed, not only upon the day now ordinarily called the *Sabbath* but alſo upon other their *holy days*. And that they made the rule of their actions on thoſe days *only* their own will and pleaſure, not God's. This they neglected and had no regard to ; and therefore they neglected and ſlighted thoſe things that God had on thoſe days commanded them. Thoſe words cannot mean their doing ſome things which might pleaſe themſelves : for even what God commanded might and ought to pleaſe them, and they were to delight themſelves in them. Again, The ſenſe of the

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words *ſhalt honour him not doing thine own ways*, &c. is no other but that they ſhould in general honour God by keeping his Commandments, and preferring his Will before their own will and ways when inconſiſtent with or oppoſed thereto, and particularly by keeping his Commands whatſoever they were concerning the obſervation of the Sabbath, that by the Phraſe of *their own ways* is meant their ſinful ways in oppoſition to God's Will and Commands is manifeſt from *Iſa.66. Verſe* 3, and 4.

Another miſtake is, That ſuppoſing the *Jews* were commanded by God for the 24 hours of the Sabbath to abſtain from all words and thoughts which were not nearly at leaſt relating to the immediate Worſhip of God, that this Command obligeth all Chriſtians. For on the contrary it is moſt certain, that no Commands given to the *Jews* by *Moſes* oblige any Chriſtians as given by him. They were particularly directed to that particular people and no other. If there be any of thoſe Commands that are enjoyned from God by Chriſt, who was the great Prophet and Meſſenger of God to all Mankind, or by Reaſon, and Natural Light, ſo that they appear in all circumſtances to have more good effects than bad ones, then indeed they oblige all men. Now the *Judaical* Obſervation of the Lord's day to all men

men (howſoever particular that of their Sabbath was) is not commanded neither by Chriſt, nor by Reaſon. There is not one word of it in the Scripture. And for Reaſon, it is not imaginable that it is poſſible for all Perſons of all tempers in all Climates and places, as the affairs of humane nature now are, to obſerve it as the *Jews* did; nor is it of more good effect, that it ſhould be ſo obſerved. And as for the tranſlation of the *Jewiſh* Sabbath-day from the Seventh to the Firſt Day of the Week by Chriſt or his Apoſtles, it is without any ground from any Teſtimony that I remember to have heard. Nor is the Reaſon uſually given more conſiderable, *viz.* the Redemption of the World by Chriſt being a greater Mercy than the Creation: For the Creation was of Millions more, and that of ever bliſsful and happy and moſt perfect Creatures, than the Redemption was. And indeed if the minute circumſtances with which the *Jews* obſerved their Sabbath be Moral, and therefore not changed by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, much more ſhould the preciſe day be ſo. Finally, it is to be affirmed, That only all thoſe Precepts in the *Moſaical* Law are obligatory to all men at all times, which concern the end of all our wills and actions, namely the *Univerſal Good*, conſiſting of pleaſing God, the greateſt good of others and our own Salva-

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tion or moſt compleatly perfect and happy ſtate; and conſequently the ſuppreſſion of all ſelfiſh and immoderate Appetites or Luſts in us; And moreover thoſe few general Precepts of Prudence which perpetually to obſerve doth moſt obtain this our one *ultimate end*; ſuch as the material part of the Commands againſt Idolatry, Prophaneneſs, Irreligion, Murder, Adultery Falſe-witneſs, *&c.* how many and which theſe are our own Reaſon and Prudence, if we have them not repeated in our Chriſtian Religion muſt only determine by the ſame ways they uſe in other matters.

In all that I have ſaid concerning the *Judaical* Obſervation of the Lord's day, I would not be thought as if I intended or deſired in the leaſt to undervalue and diſcourage the employment of our minds about ſpiritual things, and conſequently ſpirituality of Soul; that is, ſuch a temper whereby a man is apt to apprehend and be affected with ſpiritual matters. No, I would have it introduced into the World as much as humane nature is capable of. For although I do not think this employment and temper of Soul to be our abſolute and greateſt Perfection (which I doubt is a miſtake among ſome of the higheſt Religioniſts of all ſorts and parties) yet I know it to be a moſt excellent Inſtrument thereof, *viz.* of *Univerſal Love and Good-*

Goodneſs, in oppoſition to *Selfiſhneſs*. It allays and calms all our bodily Paſſions and conſequent bad Impreſſions and Inclinations, it clears our Reaſon and Perception of all Perfection, of the Nature of God, of the Truth of Things, and conſequently of the Nature and Excellency of Virtue, and its only inſtance Univerſal Charity and Goodneſs, yea, and cauſeth us to be deeply affected with it, to admire and love it. It immediately diſpoſeth the Soul to a ſweet and eaſie benignity and goodneſs, *&c.* Wherefore, I ſay, I would endeavour to introduce it as much ſtill as humane nature ſhall be obſerved to be capable of; that is, ſo much as will be the cauſe of moſt good among men as their natures or affairs are neceſſarily conſtituted. For it is certain, The employment of a man's mind about ſpiritual matters may be too much, ſo that it may waſt or dull ones ſpirits and conſequently render one leſs ſufficient to apprehend well and be affected with either ſpiritual or ſenſible things; it may weaken, flatten and darken our apprehenſion and conception, diminiſh and impair much all our natural parts; it may render us fearful, flattering, of too mean an opinion of our ſelves compared with others, ſuperſtitious, pieviſh, moroſe by too great an expenſe, or contracting ſome certain ill Craſis of the Spirits; in fine, very

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little and mean minded perſons, dull, afraid of, and angry with every ſmall thing beyond meaſure: whereas a free and diſcreet uſe of bodily pleaſures and converſe with ordinary affairs may ſecure us from thoſe Infirmities. But thus much I think the Condition of men will very well generally bear.

1. That there be ſome time ſet apart for the publick Worſhip of God to which all men, except very rarely, may reſort, which time may be once in the Week at leaſt or oftner.

2. Particularly to commemorate his Creation, Preſervation and Adminiſtration of the whole Univerſe, and therein with all ſutable affections to acknowledge his infinite Perfections diſplaied: and more particularly to commemorate that part of his providence or adminiſtration or direction and government of the affairs of Mankind, *viz.* Jeſus's coming amongſt us from him for our Redemption from a State of great Imperfection, Wickedneſs, Miſery, by his Doctrine, Life, gracious Influence, procurement of Pardon, *&c.* all this alſo with agreeable affections of Soul, for which the day of his Reſurrection by his own Power and Virtue, being the moſt wonderful thing and peculiar to him, and therefore the great confirmation of his miſſion is well choſen. To

which might be added by Christians, for ought I see, the weekly celebration of the day of his Ascension, if the affairs of Mankind could bear it, which was also a most magnificent and strange thing though happenning to two others before, and necessarily inferrs his resurrection.

3. Upon the same day to Worship God in secret too more or less according as our bodily temper and necessary affairs will permit, which every ones sincere prudence must determine. Particularly to entertain ones self with such actions and thoughts before the publick Worship as will prepare a man to perform it better, more to apprehend and be affected with the spiritual things that do occur therein, and to abstain from those things which may indispose and unfit a man for that performance: And so afterwards to take some time to impress upon our memory, examine, inculcate upon our affections what might have occurred: and moreover to think of, contemplate, and affect our selves with any other spiritual things, as the Existence, Nature, Actions of God, of our own Souls, what we were, are, should be, shall be: our imperfections, perfections, &c. for all which we are fitter by freedom from bodily action and calmness. This very day is also a very fit season for instructing of Families, and performing Offices

fices and Duties of Religion with them, alſo for all acts of Charity both Spiritual and Corporal to our Neighbour. The Church of *England* hath in one of her Canons very piouſly deſcribed how ſhe would have holy days to be obſerved: which were it carefully obeyed would be a very grave Ornament to her. Nor can it therefore be expedient for ſuch an end to encourage Plays, Paſtimes, Recreations, worldly Affairs, but barely to tolerate ſome leſſer matters which prudence might not think fit to exact rigidly, but to leave to every ones liberty. And as for times of neceſſary Diverſion or Recreation which uſually is accompanied with ſome folly and debauchery, others are a great deal fitter for ſuch a purpoſe.

And now if the Lord's day and other holy days were thus obſerved, there would be far more of ſpiritual employment of our minds, and more effectual for the great end of making us better than there was ever among the *Jews* in their ſtricteſt obſervation of their Sabbath; a great part of which was taken up in the bare external Worſhip of God, or in the external ſigns of Honour, as in the care of their beſt Apparel, and well provided Tables, their Gate, their Voice, and other ſuch unprofitable and trivial matters, as *R D Kimchi* obſerves upon the place in *Iſaiah* before quoted. What a ridiculous

Obſervation of their Sabbath was the abſtaining from twiſting ones Whiskers, or running a Needle twice through a Clout, or writing two Letters, becauſe theſe were מעשים or Works? Of this enough every where in their Authours, and particularly in the *Talmudical Tract of the Sabbath*: moſt of which were only an ignorant and ſuperſtitious application of God's general Command, as it ſeems, of which ſome Chriſtians have been or may be ſoon too much guilty. It may be here adviſed that there is great difference as to perſons; and that there may be ſome whoſe conſtant employment or leiſure may give them ſuch advantages of ſpending much time upon other days about ſpiritual things, that it may not be ſo needful nor convenient for them to ſpend ſo much time on theſe; and that oftimes the principal reaſon eſpecially of their publick obſervation is the giving a good Example to thoſe who elſe would take too much liberty. But to the generality of men, if theſe fixed and ſet times be not made uſe of for the ſpiritual employment of their minds, it will be quite neglected.

But ſo much for this digreſſion, which I intended no other than only in general to ſuggeſt many things to be conſidered concerning this matter, not particularly to diſcuſs them; and therefore have taken no no-

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tice of what others of other perſwaſions had ſaid, or might have objected.

In like manner are they miſtaken who confeſs, That the beſt actions the beſt men do are ſins, and even deſerve eternal puniſhment (but pardoned in Chriſt) from that place in the Prophet miſunderſtood, *viz.* *All our Righteouſneſs are as filthy rags*, ſpoken of the generality of the Nation of the *Jews*, who were very bad, *Iſaiah* 64. *Verſe* 6. When the truth of the Caſe is, that many and many a good man have done many and many an Action in which there was no ſin, and which deſerves no puniſhment. For he who hath in any Action with the greateſt vigour of his Soul he then had, propounded, intended and willed his duty, right, juſt, and that conſiſting in the moſt univerſal good, the greateſt good he can know, *viz.* in pleaſing of God and doing the greateſt good to the World he at that time was capable of, and moſt perfecting and making happy himſelf in ſo being and doing; I ſay, this perſon ſeems to me to have done ſome action in which there's no ſin nor deſert of puniſhment, and I do not doubt that there hath been many ſuch an action done. It is true, Righteouſneſs and the good of the whole World, God, our Neighbour, our ſelves, and God alone deſerve to be loved

with a greater degree of Intenſeneſs than we are capable of, even with the infinite one of God himſelf: but this is but a neceſſary Imperfection of all created Natures, even of the higheſt Angel, and would have been in the ſtate of Innocency.

In giving thanks likewiſe we muſt uſe the ſame care. For as men may confeſs ſins when they are no ſins, and when they are not guilty of them; ſo alſo they may thank God that they have received certain favours and benefits from his hands, when either they are no benefits nor inſtances of his favour, or if they be they have not received them. So men may thank God that they are led into ſome great truth, as they think, that they are of this or t'other perſwaſion or party, and in the right way, and now ſure to be ſaved; when their truth is ſome trifling or hurtful errour, and 'twere better for them and the World, that they were of another mind, or another way, and even of that from which it may be they may thank God they are delivered.

Thus men may alſo thank God, and be highly raviſhed with the diſtinguiſhing love of God to them in electing, juſtifying, ſealing, glorifying and ſaving them, and ſecuring them certainly from Eternal Miſery or Hell; when all this may be only an Imagination

nation of their own cauſed by ſelf-love and ſelf-flattery, and nothing of truth in it, and really they are very bad perſons, having many and great Luſts unmortified, known even to themſelves (but yet, as they think, to be over-looked by God, becauſe they are and will be ſure they are his Elect Children) and more yet unknown, unregarded, and not taken notice of by themſelves, being, alas, oft-times very ignorant, inept, careleſs or partial examiners of themſelves.

Men may thank God that they are not guilty of ſome ſins, when they are, not knowing their own hearts, which is a very difficult thing; and that they have ſome graces, as ſincere Zeal, Humility, *&c.* when they have not, but inſtead thereof, or at leaſt mixed therewith Wrath, Pride, Vain-glory: or in general, that they have greater degrees of holineſs than they truly have, as the Phariſee did. They may thank God for owning their Cauſe by Succeſs in War or Law, when he doth not, but only chaſtiſeth it may be or correcteth another. They may alſo apply general or particular Promiſes made to other good men to themſelves, and thank God for them that he hath made ſuch Promiſes to them, when they do not appertain to them. And laſtly, In the particular deduction and recital of our Caſes or Conditions, or the reaſons and grounds of

our Hopes we must observe the same still, not aggravate nor extenuate more than is true. As a man may propose to God in his Prayers the great machination and malice of his Enemies, their insulting over him, the dishonour of God himself by them, if he be not delivered by him; when little of this may be true, most of it being only conceited so out of Pride, to render himself more considerable, or to shew that he can or will deal with them all, or out of Wrath; or it is more feared than real: many other Instances of these Particulars might be given.

SECT. II.

II. THE Second due Qualification of the Sense of our Prayers is, that the things be Just. And this respects only that part of Prayer called Petition. When we desire that God should give or grant any positive or privative good thing to us, let us be as sure as we can that it is just he should grant it to us. Justice is a property of an action, and that which we *immediately* desire in Prayer, is God's *granting any thing to us.* And here we are especially to use Divine Revelation or God's Word rightly interpreted, and our own best Reason to know

know what is Juſt. Thus for Example we muſt not pray to God that he would grant us any thing which may gratifie our Revenge, Envy, Ambition, Covetouſneſs, Wrath, Vain-glory, or any other Luſt: as ſometimes the ruine or deſtruction or hurt of our Enemies, indeed becauſe *ours*; Proſperity for our ſelves and ours, and ſucceſs in an unjuſt or wicked Undertaking, great Riches, Relations, Employments, Parts, and Gifts, without taking any notice of ſerving God or doing good therewith; but only that we might be ſuperiour to others, or acquire Name or Reputation, or be able to advance and propagate certain Opinions and Uſages, becauſe *ours*, and aboliſh or remove others, becauſe *contrary to ours*: in which caſe our Requeſt is not that God would grant theſe things to be done, becauſe good for the World and pleaſing therefore to himſelf, but indeed to gratifie us only, and that in hurtful miſchievous and therefore unlawful deſires. This oft-times lies at the bottom, and is the only cauſe. And though we may ſometimes ſlightly or it may be confidently judge the things beneficial to the World, to others as well as our ſelves, and acceptable to God, yet 'tis the gratification of thoſe unlawful deſires may make us to judge ſo. Sometimes indeed and moſt ordinarily perhaps there is a

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mixture. St. *James* tells his fellow Christians that some of them *asked and received not because they asked amiss to consume it upon their lusts* or pleasures, those *(viz.)* of pride and sensuality, *James* 4. *Verse* 3. *The Sacrifice of the wicked is abomination, how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?* Prov. 21. *Verse* 27.

We shall often hear of Fastings and Prayers of contrary and diverse Parties for Victory and Success in any Affairs and Thanksgivings too, when both cannot be just. In such Cases it is a very good Petition that God would favour or prosper the just Cause. And yet this may not always seem good to God neither; but we ought to refer it to him as all other Petitions. Thus Sects and Parties in Religion pray with a great earnestness and confidence for the Conversion or Extirpation of each other, when it is sure but one of those Prayers can be just.

If when we Petition God for any thing we be careless and negligent whether it be just or no, and yet perhaps very confident and bold too in asking, we greatly dishonour God. For hereby we beget an Opinion in our selves and others and such a suitable behaviour, that God is more fond of us and our concerns than of what is just and right, that is in effect, that he loves us in particular better than all the World besides, as if he

he muſt needs do what we deſire him, whether it be right or wrong. But if we do attend to and examine with as much care as we ought before we pray whether what we pray be juſt and fit for God to give, and do without any prejudice from ſelf-love conclude it may be ſo, and yet ſhould be miſtaken; this is only a defect of our knowledge, the ill conſequence of which is ſoon amended by referring all our Petitions to the unerring Wiſdom of God, of which hereafter.

But we may through undue ſelf-love ſo flatter our ſelves and think our ſelves ſo acceptable and dear to God that we may conceit it cannot but be juſt for him to do what eſpecially we with great earneſtneſs and zeal (as if he were the inſpirer of it and put it into our hearts, when it is it may be our own Pride or other ſelf-love) Petition him to do. More modeſty better becomes us, whereby we may have a true and due judgment of our ſelves. And when we have that and do with good reaſon think our ſelves ſo far good only as we really are, and conſequently in the favour of God; yet we are to be ſo modeſt too as to remember that we can but very rarely certainly tell in particulars with all their circumſtances what is abſolutely beſt for the World, and conſequently what is juſt for him to do. He who

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is All-comprehending in his knowledge always certainly knows, and to him therefore we refer the Justice, and consequently the granting of our desires. The confidence of some persons in their Prayers proceeding from Ignorance and Pride when their tempers have been heated especially, how blameable, how hateful and contemptible?

The wiser sort of *Heathens* had so good an opinion of their Deities, and consequently of their Duty towards them that they would be sure to ask nothing from them but what was just. Χρὴ τὰ ἐσκὸτα παρ δαιμόνων μαςενέμεν θναταῖς φρεσὶ γνόντας τὸ παρ ποδὸς ὁίας εἰμὲν αἰσίας. *We Mortals ought to desire from the Gods those things which are fitting and just, minding the present of what condition we now are.*

Pindar. Py. Od. 3.

SECT. III.

III. THe Third due Qualification of the Sense of our Prayers is, That they be in the first place and mostly of the greatest importance and concernment. Not but that there may be some time or other too in which we may mention in our Prayers many lesser things. Things of greatest concernment and use must in proportion to

to their concernment compared with thoſe of leſs be more and more frequent in our Prayers. And this concerns all the parts or Ingredients of a Prayer. As in Acknowledgment let us be careful to be well inſtructed in the greateſt, the moſt comprehenſive and general, the moſt uſeful and beneficial Perfections in God, that we make our Acknowledgments of thoſe principally and chiefly; as that of his infinite and general goodneſs to all more than his particular goodneſs to us. And ſo when we make an Acknowledgment of the Inſtances of his Power, Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Mercy, Juſtice, let us take thoſe chiefly which are the greateſt and largeſt, and endeavour to be affected with them; ſuch as are God's Creation of all things, Preſervation, Providence throughout the whole Univerſe, that towards Mankind, and eſpecially the making of us Reaſonable Creatures and giving us ſuch Faculties, Aid, Sufficiency, Opportunities, Helps to improve our Reaſon and Underſtanding: alſo the Revelation of ſuch excellent Doctrines and Truths to the World by eſpecial Meſſengers the Prophets of old, and laſtly by Jeſus Chriſt his beloved Son.

In Confeſſion let us take notice of and bewail moſt our greateſt Sins, that have moſt of Iniquity in them, where there is the greateſt degree of the depravedneſs Inordinacy

nacy of our Wills included, the greateſt Averſation from Righteouſneſs, the greateſt degree of unreaſonable and miſchievous Self-love; in a uſual Phraſe, our *moſt aggravated Sins*. Conſequently let us confeſs our deareſt, moſt pleaſing and delightful ſins: for our greater degree of delight in any thing more than in our Duty, argues a degree of the inordinacy and depravedneſs of our wills as to Intenſeneſs: thoſe alſo which are moſt frequent.

Contrariwiſe let us not confeſs little ſins much, and neglect great ones, or more than thoſe; confeſs thoſe which we can more eaſily forſake, and neglect thoſe which are moſt ſweet, paſs over them or ſlightly only take notice of them; confeſs thoſe which we commit rarely, and neglect thoſe which we do frequently. When this fault is in our Confeſſion purely through ignorance, through want of underſtanding of the degrees of ſin, and there is no fault in the will, which I ſcarce believe, it begets in us a great deal of ſuperſtition, that is, an opinion that ſome actions are more or leſs diſpleaſing to God than indeed they are compared with others; and conſequently being more afraid of doing ſome of them and of God's anger or puniſhment for them than we ſhould be, and in others again leſs: which is a very bad effect and doth much deprave and corrupt the

the Inclinations of the will as to the Inſtances of our duty, and renders us leſs capable of any happy condition till we are better inſtructed in them, though we ſhould be truly conſcientious and love that which we judge right and our duty: which poſſibly may be. But I am apt to think that moſt ignorant ſuperſtition proceeds from unconſcientiouſneſs. But when this fault proceeds out of a deſire to indulge our ſelves in ſome ſin, both the Cauſe and the Effect is extremely bad.

If we have occaſion to confeſs National Sins or thoſe which are moſt practiſed frequently by the generality of a Nation, have we a care to confeſs thoſe principally and moſt which are indeed the greateſt both as to the Principle and the Effect; thoſe that argue and include the greateſt degree and neglect of, and averſation from our duty, and the great inſtance thereof compared with other objects; or the greateſt degree of *ultimate* ſelf-love compared with or oppoſed to the common good, and thoſe which are the moſt miſchievous or do the greateſt hurt in the World. Such as are ſome the more colourable and undiſcerned ſins of Malice, Pride, Envy, Ambition, Affectation of Superiority, Equality, Liberty: add Tyranny, Diſobedience, Revenge, Oppreſſion, Covetouſneſs, Fraud, Hypocriſie or want of Integrity;

tegrity; and others more notorious, of Prophaneneſs, Irreligion, Atheiſm, Unbelief, Disbelief of Chriſtian Religion, Senſuality, Laſciviouſneſs, Intemperance, *&c.* Thoſe Sins alſo which are the moſt frequent and continual in ſeveral or the ſame perſons are to be principally confeſſed.

In thankfulneſs likewiſe it is much to be attended to, and we ought to give thanks in the firſt place, and moſt frequently and moſt ardently for the greateſt favours, thoſe that are moſt publick diffuſed and general, thoſe that are ſpiritual or intellectual, thoſe that appertain more immediately to the Soul, thoſe among ſpiritual ones which concern our wills or inclinations, and in order thereto our affections, called generally by the names of Sanctification or Regeneration, purifying and renewing of the heart, or in one word uſually by the name of *Grace*; then afterwards for the good things that appertain to our Knowledge or Underſtandings, as quick and plentiful Suggeſtion, Revelation, Illumination in Truths of the greateſt Excellency, Uſe and good Effect; for ability to ſignifie, convey or propagate theſe, ſuch as ready Invention, Memory, Utterance, *&c.* all which have been known by the name of *Gifts*; Then for the good things appertaining to the Body or in it as the ſubject, as Strength, Health, Comelineſs,

neſs, plenty of ſuch things (as Food and Diet, Raiment, Habitations with their Ornaments, *&c.*) which gratifie our Senſes, and ſecure us from Corporeal Pain which the moſt neceſſarily affects us, and conſequently from neceſſary care and ſolicitude to prevent it, *&c.* Then for the External good things without us, of Riches, Reputation, Liberty, Magiſtracy, Friends, Relations, *&c.* The Reaſon of all this is, becauſe to thank God more for perſonal than publick benefits, as it doth uſually proceed from, ſo it will increaſe a *particular and ſelfiſh* ſpirit. To thank him more for bodily or external ſenſible good things than for ſpiritual is both a ſign and cauſe of ſenſuality in us; *i. e.* it doth proceed from and confirm our exceſſive love to corporeal and ſenſible good in compare with ſpiritual, as well as keep us in ſome reſpect to God. It is that which may be ordinarily obſerved, *viz.* that men are uſually much more ſenſible of and grateful to God for bodily good and the things of this life, than for ſpiritual or intellectual.

And ſo likewiſe to thank God more for Gifts than Graces, though both ſpiritual things, confirms one in too great an eſteem and love for Gifts compared with Graces, which notwithſtanding are incomparably inferiour to them. Gifts ſometimes may be ill uſed, be miſchievous and hurtful, which

 ſincere

ſincere Virtue and Grace can never in the leaſt be. Knowledge puffeth up without Charity, and is contentious, affecting, contemptuous: but Charity edifieth, ſaith the Apoſtle. Charity even without Knowledge can do no harm, but in its own nature neceſſarily tends to do good. Now although this be better than not to be thankful to God at all, than to thank him neither for bodily nor mental favours; yet it is at leaſt of far leſs good effect than to be thankful for better things more and firſt, as they deſerve. We are to thank God for every thing as neer as we can, according to its proportion of goodneſs, *viz.* in ſuch proportion as it is a part of or means to the laſt end, the *Univerſal Happineſs*. And becauſe, for Example, all ſpiritual good things are generally much more ſo than bodily, we muſt be oftner and more ſenſibe of them, more frequently and fervently thank God for them.

What hath been ſaid about thankfulneſs may be adviſed concerning Petition, that we deſire in the firſt place, principally, moſt frequently and moſt ardently the moſt univerſal or publick and ſpiritual good things, ſuch as Graces and Virtues, and then all the reſt or any of them according unto their true degree of goodneſs too.

We ſee men generally faulty in this particular, and they'l pray infinitely more heartily

tily for fair Weather or Rain when it is much wanted than for the moſt excellent and higheſt degree of any Graces or Virtues. Nay, if they dared, they would (and they really have more mind to it) pray againſt thoſe that they might not be diſturbed by them. They would ſooner pray for the Food and Pamper of their Bodys than for that which might increaſe Graces and Gifts in their Souls; more that they might have earthly Friends, who might love and honour them, than the friendſhip or favour of God; more that any man who can poſſibly puniſh them for any miſdemeanour would forgive them, than that God would; more that they may be rich, than honeſt or juſt or charitable, or make good uſe of riches, like faithful Servants and Stewards of our great Maſter God. From which ſame temper it comes that all ſpiritual benefits and favours of good Inſtruction, Exhortation, Example, and the perſons who are the Authors and Inſtruments thereof are generally leſs prized and eſteemed than a ſmall piece of Bread or Money, than the leaſt good appertaining to the Body or Eſtate, and their reward would be anſwerable if it were not for Laws or the Sentiments of a few of the wiſeſt and beſt.

So, Laſtly, our Explication of our Caſe may be too tedious, we may too operoſely

aggravate our Caſe, more comparatively with other matters we even then want than we ought.

This of Petition is according to our Saviour's own Advice in that excellent Sermon; after he had warned them againſt diſtruſt, ſolicitude and over-eager care concerning worldly goods of meat and drink and cloathing, he adds, *But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God and its righteouſneſs* (that is, probably, God's Kingdom by Chriſt, to be the Subjects thereof, or to be true Chriſtians) *and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.* Some ſpiritual good things, *viz.* Goodneſs and Virtue render us capable of all other, and fit us for the enjoyment and uſe of them; but not on the contrary. *Matt. 6. Verſe 33.*

This is a thing ſo obivous, that it is commended and adviſed by ſome of the *Heathens* in their Addreſſes to their Gods. Their praying for long Life, Glory, Beauty, Marriage, Poſterity, and other things which the Vulgar uſed to ask of their Gods the Satyriſt derides as folly; becauſe they were hardly to be accounted in the number of good things, as having as much evil and miſchief attending them: But he adviſeth they ſhould rather pray for a good mind, couragious, fearleſs of death, nay, deſirous of it, patient, Maſter of Paſſions, deſpiſer of ſelfiſh ſenſual Pleaſures, *&c.* Theſe

were

were the things principally to be sacrificed for.

Fortem posce animum & mortis terrore carentem
Qui spatium vitæ extremum inter munera ponat
Naturæ; qui ferre queat quoscunq; labores,
Nesciat Iraſci, cupiat nihil, & potiores
Herculis ærumnas credat sævosq; dolores
Et Venere & plumis & cœnis Sardanapali.
Juven. Sat. 10.

To this Sense:
Ask a great mind that fears not death,
Welcomes the time of it's last breath,
That firmly bears the greatest pains,
Slav'ry of passions that disdains,
That takes stout Virtue prest with Misery
Before soft Pleasures of base Luxury.

SECT. IV.

IV. A Fourth due Qualification of the Sense of our Prayers or of the Objects, is that it be as extensive as may be. This also appertains to all the parts of a Prayer.

That our Acknowledgments, for Example,

1. Be as comprehensive as may be and general, so as to comprehend all God's Per-

fections which are uſeful to Petition, and ſuch are his always infinite (as to Intenſion, Extenſion and Duration,) Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs: for theſe certainly comprehend all.

2. That they be in ſome Prayers more particular, which particulars are to be (for all cannot be) either thoſe that are of greateſt concern or Importance, or which we beſt apprehend, or are moſt affected with, or which are moſt proper to any Petitions we may make. As for Example, Sometimes we may make our acknowledgment not only of God's goodneſs in general, but alſo of ſome particular inſtances of it, ſuch as his forbearance of us ſo long notwithſtanding our careleſs or contemptuous violations of any of his moſt righteous and holy Laws, his forgiveneſs of this or that particular ſin, of all our Sin, upon our ſincere repentance; his promiſing to us, and beſtowing upon us any particular good things, as ſuch a good advantage of Condition for Inſtruction or Virtue, ſuch an Aſſiſtance for the obtainment and performance of any particular Virtue and Duty, or againſt any Temptations, the means of Grace, as is uſually expreſſed; ſuch a Deliverance from ſuch a ſpiritual or corporeal Evil, &c. The ſame which is to be done in our Thankfulneſs and expreſſly loving God for his Benefits.

So

So our Petitions, (1*ſt.*) Let them be as general as may be and comprehenſive. It is convenient in Prayer always at leaſt to premiſe ſuch general Petitions before particular ones, and ſometimes for want of Time or Knowledge, *&c.* they may be only uſed. For Example, That God would beſtow upon us all good things that he thinks fit and juſt. As it is ſaid of *Socrates*, that he uſed when he prayed to pray only (if he always did ſo he might have done better ſometimes to have propounded and deſired things more particularly and as well referred them to God) that the Gods who knew beſt what was good would give him good things.

Εὔχετο Σωκράτης πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς ἁπλῶς τἀγαθὰ διδόναι ὡς τοὺς θεοὺς κάλλιστα εἰδότας ὁποῖα ἀγαθά ἐστιν, as *Xenophon* reports. And ſomewhat more particularly that he would provide for us all good things of our Souls, Bodys, Eſtates, which comprehend all as to their ſubjects; or all here and hereafter, which comprehend all as to time; or to deſcend further, Knowledge and Goodneſs, Gifts and Graces, which comprehend all as belonging to our Souls; more particular yet, that he would give us to live godlily, righteouſly and ſoberly, which comprehends all Grace or Virtues, all our Dutys towards God, our Neighbour and our Selves. Such

Xenoph. in memor. Lib. 1.

alſo are the Petitions in the Lord's Prayer.

But then (2*ly.*) after theſe general Petitions, as oft as we have opportunity, let there be others as particular as may be, eſpecially in things of the greateſt Importance and ſometimes in leſſer Matters, according to the degree of their Importance to us, and of our apprehending them, and being affected with them. For the moſt part we better apprehend and are more affected with particular things than with generals. Thus let us pray ſometimes for particular Virtues or Graces, Parts or Gifts, bodily or external good things: ſometimes for many and a great number together. At one time we may longer inſiſt upon ſome one or a few only, at another time upon others, much according to our Need and Want, and conſequently alſo the Importance of the thing to us, according to our apprehending our want thereof, and being affected therewith. And in order hereunto Men ſhould make reflection upon their ſpiritual and corporal Condition, ſee what they want and what they have, and accordingly direct their Endeavours and their Prayers. They ſhould obſerve whether they want any Grace or Virtue, or ſtrength againſt any Sin or Luſt, or any other eſpecially more uſeful thing, and remember the next time to propound it, and beſeech it of God more earneſtly and ſolemnly,

ſolemnly, as they may then and at other times with frequent ejaculatory Prayers. Men are commonly here more careleſs of their Relation to God than they might or ſhould be. Every thing which they ought to take any care to obtain, they ought alſo to ask God's Favour in it. For whatſoever we our ſelves can already do, our whole power and ability, both to will and to do, is from God and perpetually dependent upon his will and pleaſure: which he can increaſe in us as much as he pleaſeth, as he can do all things for us without making any uſe of us.

St. *Paul* commands it, *Philip.* 4. *Verſe* 6. ſaying, *in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſt be made known unto God.* And the *Heathens* themſelves in any conſiderable affair of Life, nay, the Vulgar in the ſmall and trifling uſed to invoke, or by ſome Rite to apply themſelves to ſome of their greater or leſſer Deitys.

Again, Let our Petitions be as extenſive as may be in reſpect of Perſons too; even to all who want any thing that we can and ought to deſire for them; we are not to confine our Prayers and Petitions to our ſelves.

For Confeſſions let them be at leaſt moſtwhat very comprehenſive, and ſometimes as often as is meet (which our Prudence muſt determine) more or leſs particular, eſpecially

of

of frequent ſins, of ſins we are moſt in danger of for the future.

We may add our Profeſſion of Obedience to be alſo the moſt univerſal in the moſt general Terms, and ſometimes more or leſs particularly.

And theſe are ſome Directions concerning the Senſe of our Prayers, or the Objects of the various Operations of our Souls in them.

SECT. V.

II. SOme Directions concerning the Actions or Operations of our Souls in Prayer. The principal of which (very briefly to recite them once more) are attention to and acknowledgment of the Divine Perfections, conſequent Affections, and motions of our Will, ſuch as are fear of his Power and Juſtice if we do offend and perſiſt ſo to do; truſt in his Power and Mercy (one Branch of his Goodneſs to the World as Juſtice ſtrictly ſo called is the other) ſo far as we are innocent or repent; Admiration, Honour and Reverence to him for all his Perfections together, or for any in particular, unreſerved Obedience and Submiſſion to him upon the account of his Infinite Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs or Univerſal Good

Goodneſs, deſire of him, and dependence upon him, and truſt in him for all things fit and juſt to be given to us upon the account of his Infinite Power, Wiſdom and Univerſal Goodneſs, Love to him for his Univerſal Goodneſs, Thankfulneſs for his inſtances of Bounty to all and to us in particular, which is alſo a diſtinct particular ingredient of Prayer. Add to theſe the other Ingredients of Prayer before mentioned: Confeſſion of our Sins, Profeſſion of our Obedience, Thankſgiving, Recital of our Caſes or Conditions, unfeigned Deſires or Petitions. Theſe, I ſay, are the principal Actions or Operations of Soul in Prayer; concerning which I propound theſe following Directions.

(1.) That they be all ſincere; by which I mean two things:

1. That they be not pretended only but really in thy Soul, and in that degree of which thou uſeſt the fit and proper Signs: That there be not only the External or other Signs, but alſo the things ſignified: That there be not only Words with their loudneſs or lowneſs, quickneſs or ſlowneſs, and various order and poſition of theſe, and ſo other geſtures of the parts of the Body before named; when there is wanting ſenſe and underſtanding of ſome thing and attention thereto, and all other thoſe inward Motions

Motions and Actions of Soul ſo often mentioned, or the degrees thereof which are properly ſignified by them. When thou conceiveſt or uttereſt words, know what thou ſayeſt, Attend to what is or may be beſt ſignified thereby, as much as thou canſt. Talk not like a Parrot, or rather like young Children at School, when they ſay their Leſſons. When thy Voice is vehement or loud, let it not be meerly cuſtomary, or becauſe thou affecteſt it only for ſome undue end; for ſome undue end, I ſay, nor, it may be, to quicken thy Invention or Memory, or clear thy Conception, or becauſe being aſſured of the goodneſs of any thing, thou on purpoſe exciteſt and uſeſt the help of thy corporeal Paſſions to affect or determine thy Soul; all which ſometimes are and may appear to others with approbation to be no unfit reaſons. Let thy affection in thy own heart, and a great deſire to convey it and to excite it more in others or thy ſelf, or thy great Admiration of the Excellency of the thing, or whatever paſſion or operation of Soul in any degree is properly and fitly ſignified by thy vehemency of Voice, go before it, and be really inherent in thy Soul, and be the cauſe from whence it proceeds. If thou compoſeſt thy countenance, or takeſt thy ſenſes from other objects, let there really be great and ſerious attention. If thou liſteſt

liſteſt up thy eyes or hands, let it proceed from inward deſire, Addreſs to God, and Approbation. If thou bendeſt thy Knee or Body, or erecteſt it by ſtanding up, let there be truly and really theſe things in thy Soul. Although I know too that many of theſe Signs are not ſo neceſſarily proper to theſe affections and actions of Soul, but that they may alſo be done from, and ſometimes ſignifie no more in ſome circumſtances than unwillingneſs to give a needleſs offence, and a certain Chriſtian Humanity and Civility. Nay not only words and geſtures of Body are to be true Signs of inward Operations of Soul, but alſo ſome Actions or Operations of Soul truly ſignified are much ſigns again of others. Thus great Affections and Paſſions for things in men eſpecially who ſtudy, and are ſuppoſed to conſider and examine, whoſe buſineſs it much is or ſhould be, are ſigns to the generality of people of their clear underſtanding of the certain truth and excellent uſefulneſs of them. And this together with a pretended or real great love to the Souls of men (which is indeed a truly generous and divine temper) have been ſome of the cauſes that ſome men have had ſo many followers and admirers, and whatſoever hath been ſaid by them hath been believed to be as true and excellent as the Word of God it ſelf, without any ſcruple.

When

When therefore our Affections are great and ſtrong, let there be alſo preceding an underſtanding and conviction of the truth and uſefulneſs of things, either from our own ſight and perception, if we can, or from Divine Teſtimony, or (which is moſt common, eaſie and much ſafe) from the moſt general Teſtimony of the wiſeſt and beſt men. Let not our great Paſſions be only an affected buſsle to make people believe we are in earneſt for ſome great matters which we have diſcovered.

2. By ſincerity in theſe Actions in Prayer, I mean, that they all or thy whole Prayer have their *due Ultimate end* unmixed with any other. Let thy Ultimate End in general be ſincerely to do thy Duty, that which thou judgeſt thou oughteſt, and to be more diſpoſed to be univerſally, conſtantly, courageouſly good and virtuous, to love and pleaſe God, to be the moſt beneficial to the World, and to perfect and make happy thy ſelf by poſſeſſing thy Soul with the Graces of a moſt univerſal, conſtant and generous Charity, and that in the beſt Inſtances, *viz.* in ſpiritual things as much as thou canſt, and in all others when they may be fitteſt or the only Inſtances thou canſt then perhaps be charitable in; of ſelf-denyal, humility, ſpirituality, by the mortification of all *inordinacy* and *immoderacy* of thy Appetites, of all Luſts

Lusts; by being sober, advised, discreet, and wise, and by the use of all other good things we are capable of receiving, possessing, enjoying from God: Let these things, I say, be purely and sincerely thy *Ultimate End.* If thou acknowledgest God's Infinite Perfections, let it be to produce in thee some way or other (as it will) Obedience and Imitation and consequently Universal Righteousness, Holiness and all the Instances thereof now mentioned.

If thou confessest thy Sins, let it be to excite and stir up, whet and sharpen thy hatred against all Sin; and when thou professest thy obediential Resolution, let it be to confirm, strengthen and invigorate thy love and liking, resolution and bent of Soul to all Obedience, and to thy Duty universally.

When thou thankest God ingenuously for his great kindness and love, for his benefits to thee, let it be sincerely to engage thee to love him again; consequently to imitate, obey, please him, and consequently to be universally holy and righteous. When thou propoundest or recitest thy Case or Condition, or that of any others for whom thou prayest, let it be sincerely to cause thy self some way to be better, by causing thee more to attend to thy dependence upon God and to be more sensible thereof, and consequently

quently to behave thy ſelf ſo as to pleaſe him.

And laſtly, When thou deſireſt or petitioneſt any thing, let thy *Ultimate end* be ſtill the ſame; quicken thy acknowledgment and ſenſe of thy entire dependence upon God by which thou may'ſt be engaged to love and pleaſe him, which cannot be without holineſs Univerſal. Moſt expreſly Petition God for his Grace and Aſſiſtance to make thee the moſt perfectly holy and righteous thou art capable of, in ſuch manner and inſtances as is aforeſaid, truſting in God he will grant thoſe thy Petitions (then which none are more acceptable to him) and uſing the utmoſt of thy endeavours in complyance with his ſupervenient help. Finally, When thou beſeecheſt God for all or any other good things, let it be that thou may'ſt be diſpoſed and enabled thereby to ſerve him and the world, to live profitably and comfortably here, and at laſt to obtain an immortal and everlaſting reward. Theſe things, I ſay again, are to be purely, ſincerely and unmixedly the *Ultimate end* of thy Praying in general, and of all the parts thereof. Let no other thing come in the place hereof or mix and blend therewith. Let not, for Example, meer dull Cuſtom be the end; that is, meer pleaſing a man's ſelf with ſo doing, and eſpecially the external or bodily part,

part; becauſe a man hath uſed ſo to do, he will ſo do. Not the meer Action or Uſage ſo much as the good effect of it is to pleaſe, ſuch as the name of our Duty includes and ſuppoſes. We muſt not pray as aged men in part uſe old faſhions, or ſome other little actions, as walking, eating, drinking at certain times, *viz.* principally becauſe they have been uſed ſo to do; it is eaſie, it is delightful meerly to do ſo, and it would be painful and troubleſome to them to abſtain or to live after any other manner. Let not again the procuring a great Opinion of us for Sanctity, for Conſcienſciouſneſs, Honeſty, Spirituality, for great Parts or Gifts, for Readineſs, Copiouſneſs, variety of Invention, Memory, Judgment both in Things and Words, Senſe and Phraſe, for the uſefulneſs and general goodneſs alſo of both, that we can Pray much, or are well furniſhed with Matter, that we can Pray long and often, or are very frequent in Prayer, that we are good Church-men, that we never miſs Prayers, that we can Pray with an acceptable and pleaſing Delivery or Voice; let not this vain glory of Praying long and frequently in every place, in Synagogues, corners of Streets, reproved by Chriſt in the Hypocrites of his Age, *Matt.* 6. I ſay, let not this be the End. Again, more Univerſally, Let not the Gra-

tification of any Luſt, as Senſuality, Luxury, Eaſe and Sloth, Malice, Ill-will, Pride, Affectation of Superiority, Equality or Liberty, Revenge, Envy, Ambition, Vain-glory, Covetouſneſs; not the Procurement of ſome Advantage for Employment, Preferment, Rule, Gain, Trade, or the like, in the leaſt peep in and mix with the noble end before mentioned. Let not, laſtly, even the pleaſure, ſatisfaction and delight we may find in all the Operations of our Souls in Prayer, ſuch as clear perception and underſtanding of God, his Attributes, of things ſpiritual, future, ſublime, and of great concernment, eſpecially our being affected with them; not the pleaſure of our both great and good Paſſions, as Admiration, and Honour, Love, Joy, Faith and Truth, *&c.* though rightly and duly excited according to the true goodneſs of things underſtood, uſually ſignified by the names of *Tranſports*, *Raviſhments*, *Extaſies*, I ſay, let not even this be our *Ultimate end*; but rather one exceeding little, and very inconſiderable part thereof, the other of being bent and reſolved to pleaſe God by doing all good, being infinitely more valuable, as tending to an infinitely greater good. Notwithſtanding let us maintain and cheriſh this our pleaſure and ſatisfaction all we can poſſibly in a thing ſo rightly directed, and ſo truly

uſeful

uſeful to pleaſe God and ſerve the World, and thank God we are ſo tempered as to receive ſo much therefrom. And theſe therefore being but perſonal and proper Goods muſt not either in this nor any other action be placed in the room of our *Ultimate end* ſo often named, nor be admitted to any mixture or co-ordinacy with it, but as Inſtruments or little parts thereof. The pleaſing God and doing the greateſt good to all others, and our own Salvation (that is, our own greateſt Perfection and Happineſs) conſidered all together as one good thing is abſolutely the nobleſt and moſt perfect end of our Actions we can have, and is the ſame which God himſelf always hath. But any other end beſides this (which almoſt always is ſome perſonal good where the other is not) is comparatively mean, ignoble, ſordid, contemptible.

All the *Pſalms* are Inſtances and Examples of this ſincerity as well as fervency and other qualifications to follow as much as can be conjectured by Words written (and feignedneſs and hypocriſie and bie, and bad reſpects would ſomewhat betray themſelves) as *Pſalm* 17. *Verſe* 1. *Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my Prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips*; or as in the Margin, *without lips of deceit.* The moſt likely ſenſe is, that *David* had no other end

in his Prayer to God, but that God ſhould favour that which was right, that he ſhould beſtow that which was juſt upon him. And *Pſalm 66. Verſe 18. If I regard Iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* If a man have an habitual love to, and approbation of any wickedneſs, it is the moſt likely way to, and moſt generally it would, hinder the granting his Prayer; nor can a man ſee any ſufficient reaſon to expect any ſuch thing, if he be conſcious to himſelf of regarding any Iniquity with allowance. But much leſs ſure could *David* think his Prayer ſhould be heard, if he were conſcious to himſelf that he was guilty of inſincerity or that particular Iniquity of having any unlawful end even in his Prayer it ſelf, as to gratifie Revenge, Pride, *&c.* It is true, It might ſeem in ſome places as if ſome of his Prayers proceeded from Revenge, as eſpecially *Pſalm 69. Verſe 22.* After he had complained of the cruelty of his Enemies, he prays *that their table might become a ſnare before them*, and as for *their good things*, or their peaces לשלומים (for the *Hebrews* ſignified all good by the word שלום or peace) let them be a trap, that is, let even their good things miſchieve them, or prove evil to them. *Let their eyes be darkened that they ſee not*, &c. But ſurely firſt *David* ſuppoſeth them to be villanous and wicked, unjuſt, proud, cruel men,

men, *&c.* and that they were all other milder ways incorrigible. And then certainly it is equally lawful to pray for their puniſhment, or to wiſh it, as to inflict it; which a man might and ought, if he had lawful Power. And this a man might do even in his own Caſe, not out of Revenge in the leaſt, but out of hearty love to the publick good, by encouraging, reſcuing and defending Innocency and Virtue, and by reſtraining and ſupreſſing Wickedneſs and Injuſtice. I do not think but that *David* would willingly have had his Enemies changed their minds and repented, not meerly becauſe his Enemies, but becauſe unjuſt and conſequently Enemies to God and Men, or hurtful to the World. But if it appeared they would not do that after long forbearance, there might be reaſon to judge it moſt juſt, and conſequently pray to God, that they might be puniſhed. *David* alſo is found ſomewhere praying for his Enemies (it may be till they were incorrigible but by puniſhment) *Pſ.* 35. *Verſ.* 13. *They rewarded me evil for good; but as for me, when they were ſick, my cloathing was ſack-cloath,* &c.

SECT. VI.

II. THe Second due Qualification of our Actions or Operations of Soul in Prayer, is, That they be intenſe and fervent in ſuch proportion as they ought, eſpecially conſidered comparatively with the ſame Operations about other Objects. Thus in acknowledgment of the Divine Perfections and Attributes, let us apply our minds thereto and be attentive. And ſo likewiſe in our Confeſſion, Profeſſion, Thankfulneſs, Explication, Petition; cauſe we our minds to attend to the objects thereof with all the vigour and ſtrength they ought, ſo as that they might not be too eaſily drawn off by other Objects that may either preſent themſelves to our Senſes, or make an attempt upon our Imagination; our Thoughts are not to be too ſlight, wavering, wandring, uncertain, unconſtant, ſo as to be ſometimes more ſmartly upon other matters of more trifling concerment, our ordinary, daily and ſmall Affairs, or, it may be, upon our Sins and Luſts when we are performing this Duty, we caſting only a ſhort and weak glance upon the things we are about. Our hearts and minds ought to be much, and as much as it is poſſible, upon ſuch excellent and

and uſeful things as are or ſhould be in our Prayers. We ſee with what application and attention of mind we do all other things of far leſs concernment; and in particular, if we are to make any addreſs to any perſon of Dignity and Authority and real worth, either to thank him for, or deſire from him any one and no great favour.

So for our Admiration, Honour, Reverence, Fear, Love, Faith, Hope, Joy, Delight, Reſolution of Obedience, be they in that meaſure and proportion of Life, Vigour and Strength they ought, and certainly that cannot be too much; for the Objects of all thoſe in God are infinite. In Confeſſion, let our grief for Sin in general or Sins in particular, and hatred of them be inward, piercing, great, laſting according to the miſchievouſneſs of Sin above other Evils, which is almoſt without compare, and according to the degree of Iniquity and pravity in every Sin. Our Reſolution in the Profeſſion of our Obedience let it be firm and ſtrong. Our Thankfulneſs and Love to God for his particular Goodneſs and Benefits towards us, or to any other for the Inſtances of his general Goodneſs to all; as alſo our Petitions and Deſires let them be hearty, ſtrong, vigorous, according to the goodneſs and value of the things received or deſired.

It really is an unreaſonable and unjuſti-

fiable thing that men ſhould have all theſe Paſſions and Actions, all theſe Operations of Soul in the fierceſt and intenſeſt degree about other ſmall inconſiderable, trifling objects in other affairs of Life, and yet here to be almoſt meer Hypocrites, to have little of inward Action and Life; which ſometimes betrays it ſelf even by bodily dulneſs, ſluggiſhneſs, ſleepineſs, Oſcitancy not cauſed by length or any meanneſs of the performance, but when it is done ſhort enough and well, and by mens own ſelves too: Or if they be a little buſie in external and bodily actions with their mouths or other parts of their body; yet the internal actions of their Souls, ſuch as I have above mentioned, are very ſlight, weak and ſlender. Perſons approach to God with their Lips and their Bodys when their Hearts are far from him, and, it may be, after their Covetouſneſs, or any other Luſts. Or they are there with him and converſant about him and other matter of their Prayers, as men uſe to be in the company of thoſe perſons, and in doing thoſe things they do not much care for, or have no great value for. It is really a thing of which men are to be aſhamed, that they are converſant about leſſer matters with great attention and affection, and about infinitely greater ſuch as are in this part of the Worſhip of God with little or none: it is cer-

certainly a ſign of their pitiful ignorance and errour, degeneracy, baſeneſs and meanneſs; that they are like Children and School-boys who are attentive and eager about their Sports and Paſtimes, but not at all concerned in the Cares of their Parents for them and the reſt of their Families. Is it not a ſhame to ſee men honour and admire mortal men, a potent Prince, a profound Statesman of great capacity for buſineſs, one that adminiſters Affairs with much prudence and diſpatch, or a great Scholar, one of large Revenues, ſplendid Train and Attendants, and perhaps ſometimes, but more rarely, a virtuous, juſt, pious, holy and very ſpiritual minded perſon, I ſay, to honour ſome of theſe with the Titles of *Incomparable*, *Prodigious*, and other ſignifications of aſtoniſhment: and yet to have very little of theſe in their Souls to God, from whom all theſe and the Subjects of them came, and who is the Authour of all theſe, and all other never ſo great and never ſo little things in the World; to whoſe Infinite Perfection all thoſe and all other compared are not ſo much as one Atome to the content of the ſtarry Heaven, and *whoſe is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory for ever and ever*: and this even when they make their moſt ſolemn Addreſſes and pretend to Worſhip him? And ſo likewiſe it is a ſign of pitiable ignorance

or

or folly in men to be more confident and ſecure, to put their truſt more in the favour and power of an ordinary Relation, or Friend, poſſibly in a man's ſelf, in his own Power, Wit, Prudence, Riches, Strength, than in the All-mighty, All-wiſe and All-good God, for which indeed ſometimes there may be reaſon if their deſigns or hopes be unjuſt. Who would not be moved to contempt or pity to hear men proteſt with the greateſt zeal and earneſtneſs to one ſome very little their ſuperiour, how much they are their ſervants, and with all the geſtures that may be, ſignifie it? but when they profeſs their Univerſal Obedience to God, *the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the only Potentate*, the Supreme Monarch of Heaven and Earth, in ſaying, *thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven*, or in any other words, to do it ſo remiſsly, coldly, and indifferently that if they ſhould do in like manner to any one little their betters, they would think themſelves ſo unjuſtly neglected as to bid them, or to be content they ſhould keep their ſervice to themſelves. Who could like to ſee men with great reality and ſubmiſſion to confeſs their Offences againſt thoſe they fear can puniſh them? but to confeſs to God their Offences againſt his Laws, as if they were afraid they ſhould do ſo again, and were very loth and unwilling

ling to prevent it. To ſee men with a great deal of earneſtneſs and humility, and mouthful of bleſſing render thanks to their Brother for a ſatisfying meals meat when hungry, or a refreſhing draught when thirſty, or a ſcrap of ſilver to buy them neceſſaries when deſtitute; but to thank God both in their publick and private Devotion for his innumerable Benefits, even all good things that ever we have had in our lives, and eſpecially for ſpiritual ones, as if it were a meer Compliment or Ceremony, and they would gladly have done with it, as ſoon as may be. And laſtly, How great a ſenſeleſneſs and ſottiſneſs is it in men to beg with ſo much importunity of thoſe in whoſe power it is to puniſhneſs them a little in temporary good things, forgiveneſs and pardon, or of others their favour, countenance, aſſiſtance, direction, counſel, their Alms or Charity; or in poor Priſoners guilty and ready to be condemned to mulcts, baniſhment or corporal pain or death, to Cry out with the moſt pitiful Voice for Mercy or Pardon: but to ask of God Grace to Repent, ſtrength to be better, and then pardon for innumerable leſſer and many greater and more heinous Sins, That God who can make them miſerable here and hereafter, who can throw both Body and Soul into Hell, would *forgive us our Treſpaſſes, as we forgive thoſe that*

that treſpaſs againſt us; to ask of him to take care of them and provide for them, to counſel and direct them: I ſay, to ask theſe and all other things of God, as if they were unwilling he ſhould grant them, or very indifferent and little concerned whether he did or no, or as if God were obliged to them that they would ask and receive any thing from him: What can be more abſurd, more unreaſonable, more ſhameful than this? This is not Superſtition, but Truth and Reaſon. And this ſlackneſs, ſtreightneſs, perfunctorineſs in the Worſhip of God comes from Senſuality or Immorality or both; Either men are dull and carnal and cannot take notice of, and be affected much with God who is a ſpirit, or they are unwilling to do it, they care not how little, becauſe they know they do ſuch things, and live in ſuch courſes as do not pleaſe him, and which he doth not allow of. Of this their Duty they may do a little, it may be, to appeaſe ſome remainder of the natural appetite that all men have to Worſhip God, and for Credit or Reputation ſake, and that's enough. Contray to the excellent Examples and Precepts which we have in the Holy Scriptures. There can hardly be given any more certain ſigns of the greateſt ſtrength and fervour of all thoſe Operations of the Soul in Prayer than what we meet withal in the *Pſalms* every where.

Read

Read for an Example of the moſt ſenſible acknowledgment, the 145 *Pſalm* in *Verſe* 1. is a general acknowledgment and admiration, *I will extol thee my God, O King, and I will bleſs thy Name for ever and ever*, &c. And *Verſe* 3. to *Verſe* 6. is a magnificent acknowledgment of God's Power. *Great is the Lord and greatly to be praiſed, and his greatneſs is unſearchable*, &c. and *Verſe* 11, 12, 13. again in *Verſe* 8, 9, 10, 15, 16. is an acknowledgment of the general Divine Goodneſs; and *Verſe* 17. of his Holineſs; and *Verſe* 14, 18, 19, 20. of his mercy or goodneſs to perſons in miſery and diſtreſs, eſpecially who perform their Duty to him, where alſo his Juſtice or punitive Goodneſs; and the *Pſalmiſt* concludes with as general an acknowledgment by his mouth, ſpeaking *the praiſes of the Lord, and let all fleſh bleſs his holy Name for ever and ever.*

Read alſo a magnificent particular acknowledgment of God's Power, Goodneſs and Wiſdom in *Pſalm* 104. which begins, *bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, O Lord, my God, thou art very great, thou art cloathed with Honour and Majeſty, who covereſt thy ſelf with light as with a garment, who ſtretcheſt out the heavens like a curtain*; and then ends, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wiſdom haſt thou made them all, the Earth is full of thy riches*; that is, of plenty and abundance of good things.

things. For reaſonable truſt in God we meet with the moſt ſignificant Expreſſions every where of the greateſt and boldeſt degree thereof both as to particular favours of Peace, Plenty, good Name and Honour, *&c.* and alſo in general. *Pſalm* 37. *Verſe* 3, 4, 5, 6. and ſo on throughout the whole *Pſalm. Truſt in the Lord and do good*, (behave thy ſelf as thou oughteſt and do thy Duty) *ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the Land and verily thou ſhalt be fed. Delight thy ſelf alſo in the Lord and he ſhall give thee thine hearts deſire: Commit thy way unto the Lord, truſt alſo in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs*, &c. *Pſalm* 146. *Verſe* 3. *Put not your truſt in Princes, nor in the Son of man in whom there is no help.* And *Verſe* 5. *Happy is he that hath the God of* Jacob *for his help, whoſe hope is in the Lord his God, who made Heaven and Earth*, &c. And how often doth the *Pſalmiſt* ſeem to be exalted above himſelf, and triumph in his truſt, confidence and firm hope in God?

For Confeſſion and Grief for Sin, ſee the reality and ſeriouſneſs of it in the 38 *Pſalm*, *Verſe* 3. *There is no ſoundneſs in my fleſh because of thine anger, nor any reſt in my bones, becauſe of my ſin.* And *Verſe* 18. *I will declare mine Iniquity, I will be ſorry for my ſin.* The 51 *Pſalm* is a known Example both of *David*'s hearty confeſſion of, and piercing grief and bitterneſs of Soul for his ſins, as alſo

alſo of the vehemencies of his deſire and petition to God for purging and pardon, to cleanſe and rectifie his Soul, and to forgive him, and then to grant him Joy, Comfort and Peace. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindneſs, according to the multitude of thy tender Mercies blot out my Tranſgreſſions*, &c. We may read the whole *Pſalm*, than which there cannot be any thing more pathetical. *O Lord open my mouth, and my lips ſhall ſhew forth thy praiſe*; that is, give me an occaſion and a cauſe of acknowledging and praiſing thee in this thy particular favour of granting me Purification, Pardon, Peace, and enable me to do it, and then I reſolve alſo to declare and make known how much thou deſerveſt to be praiſed, thanked, loved, admired by me and all men.

As for Profeſſion of Obedience there are not many *Verſes* in the 119 *Pſalm*, in which we have not ſome Emphatical ſignification of the firmneſs and unmovableneſs of his reſolution; the very frequency is a great ſign thereof. *Verſe* 97. *Oh how I love thy Law! Verſe* 103. *How ſweet are thy words unto my taſt! ſweeter than honey to my mouth! Verſe* 106. *I have ſworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous Judgments. Ver.* 111. *Thy Teſtimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoycing of my heart.*

Verſe

Ver. 127. *I love thy Commandments above Gold, yea above fine Gold. Ver* 131. *I opened my mouth and panted; for I longed for thy Commandments*, &c. Are these the Words and Expressions of a cold, indifferent, or of a luke-warm man in his love to, resolution for Righteousness and consequently for the Commands of God?

For the *Psalmist*'s Thankfulness and Love to God for his Benefits to him in particular, the passages and places are as numerous, *Psalm* 86. *Verse* 12. *I will praise thee O Lord, my God, with all my heart, and I will glorifie thy Name for evermore: for great is thy Mercy towards me, thou hast delivered my Soul from the lowest Hell*; משאל תחתוה or from the deep Grave, or the Grave underneath, that is, from Death, which had overtaken me, and seized upon me, had it not been for thy special care.

A very pathetical and emphatical Expression of his Love and Thankfulness to God both for his personal Favours towards himself, and those towards his own Nation, the People of the *Jews*, nay towards all his Works in all places is the 103 *Psalm*, all which Read we heedfully and imitate. *Verse* 1. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless his holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits, who forgiveth all thine Iniquity and healeth*

healeth all thy Diſeaſes, who redeemeth thy life from deſtruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindneſs and tender mercies, &c.

And laſtly, his Petitions and Deſires are with the greateſt fervency and importunity ſignified and expreſſed, and that principally in the things of greateſt concernment, eſpecially conſidering his caſe, ſometimes fain to fly to Idolatrous People for ſhelter; as particularly for to be admitted and reſtored to the external publick Worſhip of the true God, as it was by himſelf inſtituted in order to his internal Worſhip, which, as I have above ſaid contains all Religion, nay all Duty. *Pſalm* 42. *Verſe* 1. *As the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, ſo panteth my Soul after thee, O God. My Soul thirſteth for God, even for the living God; when ſhall I come and appear before God? Pſalm* 63. *O God, thou art my God, early will I ſeek thee. My Soul thirſteth for thee, my fleſh longeth for thee in a dry and thirſty Land, where no water is, to ſee thy Power and thy Glory ſo as I have ſeen thee in the Sanctuary, becauſe thy loving kindneſs is better than life; my lips ſhall praiſe thee.* The *Pſalmiſt (Aſaph)* very paſſionately expreſſeth his Joy, repoſe and acquieſcence in God, in that of the 73 *Pſalm*, *Verſe* 25. *Whom have I in Heaven and I have delighted in nothing on Earth in compare with thee*; or with thee at all, that is, *beſides thee*, as our

Tranſlation hath it. That is, I put my Truſt and place my Delight neither in any God (the *Heathen* Gods) nor man in compare with thee, or together with thee: Thou art my Ultimate Truſt, my chiefeſt Delight. *My fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is the ſtrength of my heart and my portion for ever.* The like earneſtneſs and fervency may be obſerved when the *Pſalmiſt* prays for deliverance from his ſo great and malicious Enemies, that they ſought utterly to ruine him, to defame and reproach him by malicious and miſchievous ſlanders, and ſo baniſh him perpetually, or take away his life; or when he prays for deliverance of the *Jewiſh* Nation the people of God from their Enemies; all of them things of great concernment, eſpecially conſidering God's Honour concerned too (and conſequently alſo the good of men) ſometimes in vindication of his greatneſs in oppoſition to falſe Gods, becauſe the *Heathen* would think their Gods the mightier, if they ſhould prevail; ſometimes in vindication of his Providence, both his Juſtice to puniſh very wicked perſons, his moſt unjuſt Enemies, and his Mercy in being kind and rewarding the righteous and true lovers of himſelf, ſuch as he was and ſome with him, according to his promiſe. I have before inſtanced in the 51 *Pſal.* where *David* ſo vehemently and earneſtly begs

begs for Purification, Pardon, Peace. Indeed his Sins were great and hainous, and much aggravated; and ſo we muſt have a care that we imitate him when the things we deſire are of as great concernment, our degrees of Earneſtneſs and Affection muſt be proportioned always to the importance or good effects of the action, moſtwhat depending upon the goodneſs of the objects thereof: but I doubt it is but too ordinary for Chriſtians to be guilty of more, and more hainous ſins than *David*'s were, and yet not to uſe the leaſt part of the Importunity that *David* here doth for forgivneſs, if they do deſire it at all, and make not a ſport at it. And ſo of other good things they betake not themſelves to God. St. *James* tells us, that the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous man availeth much, or the active Prayer, that in which there is much of activity and life [Ἐνεργουμένη.] That earneſtneſs or fervour is principally meant there by thoſe words ſeems from what follows of *Elias*'s praying earneſtly that it might not Rain, *&c.* [προσευχῇ προσηύξατο.] an ordinary *Hebraiſm* to expreſs earneſtneſs. *James* 1. 16. 17. Our Saviour after he had given his Diſciples an Example of Prayer, he adds an adviſement of great importunity in Petitions (ſometimes and for ſome things when neceſſary, and of great importance) and intimates

timates that ſometime it may be a condition of our receiving what we ask. *Luke* 11. *Verſe* 5. *And he ſaid unto them, Which of you ſhall have a friend, and ſhall go unto him at midnight, and ſay unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his Journey is come to me, and I have nothing to ſet before him*, &c. And *Verſe* 8. *I ſay unto you that though he will not riſe and give him becauſe he is his friend, yet becauſe of his importunity*, [διὰ γε τ ἀναίδειαν αὐτῦ] becauſe of his Impudence properly (that is, Importunity ſo great as it might ſeem near to that, or as men impudent uſe to do, who without the reſtraint of fear or ſhame do things and with the greateſt vigour and ferventneſs) *he will riſe and give him as many as he needeth.* And verily it may ſometimes be very reaſonable for God to with-hold any benefit asked, eſpecially if a great one, on purpoſe to heighten the eagerneſs and fervency of our deſires, that we might be more ſenſible of our dependence upon him, and obligation to him, and be more thankful when we do receive after ſuch long importunity. And it might reaſonably ſeem good to God not to give the thing at firſt, or with only cold and luke-warm wiſhes and deſires; nay, never to give it, if we will not take the pains to continue and invigorate, inliven our Supplications and Entreaties. And this may often

often actually be one reaſon why, as St. *James* ſaith, we ask and receive not, namely, becauſe we ask ſo rarely and ſeldom, ſo weakly, languidly, and remiſsly, and conſequently ſo unbecommingly to the great and good God ſo infinitely ſuperiour to us, and to the things themſelves; the leaſt being too good to be given to ſuch idle and heartleſs Petitioners. Indeed a man may reaſonably think that rather than ſuch Prayers ſhould be the condition of receiving, they ſhould oftner be a cauſe of denial, or ſhould even as little be the condition of receiving as none at all, if not leſs. God may give us benefits indeed, but not on condition of ſuch Prayers; as he often doth, when we do not pray at all, ungrateful Creatures!

SECT. VII.

III. A Third due Qualification of our Operation of Soul in Prayer, or rather of Prayer in general, is that it be as frequent as ought to be, and this our Prudence muſt determine. For Ejaculatory Prayers they may be at all times, in all places, all companies, upon all occaſions. And we are always to keep our mind in ſuch temper, and ſo truly innocent, as that we may in the beginning, eſpecially of any conſiderable

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action, ſend up to God a ſmart deſire for Wiſdom, Diſcretion and Prudence, ſincerity and uprightneſs in our Intenſion and Deſign; to do that which is in thoſe circumſtances beſt, for the greateſt good, and moſt pleaſing to God; for courage and ſtrength and conſtancy, or vigour and perſeverance; that we might do nothing we might have reaſon to repent of; for ſucceſs or deliverance. He alſo who much addicteth himſelf to, and frequently uſeth this ſort of Prayer, may pray much more in the ſum, and moſt-what doth pray more fervently and more ſeaſonably than he that prayeth many long continued Prayers; his Acknowledgments, Confeſſions, Profeſſions, Thankſgivings, Petitions being when he is under a ſtronger and diſtincter apprehenſion and greater ſenſe of the things he conceives in his ſhort Prayer. As for publick Prayers they are determined by the Publick, and I do not ſee but that moſt men generally might, if they pleaſed, be there as often as they are appointed: many more than there are ſurely. But eſpecially thoſe whoſe affairs are not ſo much abroad, whoſe time and garb and other circumſtances might be more eaſily fitted thereto, whoſe affairs are more regular as to time, and more at their own diſpoſe. And if all thoſe were but preſent who ſtand ſtill looking about, or who purpoſely

poſely find themſelves very little buſineſs as well to be done at another time, all thoſe who are either idle or do buſineſs of far leſs if of any concernment to be done juſt at that time, the number I do not doubt would be very conſiderably increaſed. And as for private and ſecret Prayers, ſurely moſt perſons may have opportunity to perform them once or twice a day in ſome length or other, or ſome part of the day or other. I confine them not to time nor length, though it may be beſt for men who can to fix ſome time, and to uſe to order their affairs ſo, as not to interrupt them, and that they may not be hindred by them, as poſſibly before them all, and after they be all diſpatcht. Better too they be ſhort than none at all; If it be but ſome ſhort and pithy comprehenſive form with the Lord's Prayer, of which ſome learned, judicious, pious and devout men have been ſo deſerving of the Publick as to give great variety, which men need not be ignorant of, if they have a mind to know. It is as a thing of great conſequence to be adviſed here, That thoſe who educate and look after Children, eſpecially Mothers (than which they cannot do a more tender Office of Love and Care) do cauſe their Children after riſing and before going to bed to utter ſome ſhort Sentences of Petition and the Lord's Prayer, and 'twould do well to

add the Paraphraſe upon it in the Publick Catechiſm; and to learn them betimes to acknowledge and worſhip their Maker. And cannot then they do at leaſt ſo much, and it is like ſomewhat more themſelves? And might not all others find as much time as that will come to, if they had a mind to it? But this eſpecially, as I above ſaid, may they do whoſe affairs are known to be at certain times, whoſe affairs are more in their diſpoſal, and leſs indiſpoſe them, and ſuch eſpecially may they be whoſe affairs are moſt within doors and domeſtick, who are not wearied and tired with bodily labour; though perſons oft do this too more than they need, and when they need not. What ſhould hinder moſt perſons every day as ſoon as they riſe from retiring a little by themſelves, and alſo with their Families, ſo many as their affairs will ſpare (and let them not be ſpared without conſiderable neceſſity) praying to God to keep them from all ſin and danger that day and all their lives, to give them grace and peace, the good things of the Soul and of the Body, the good things of this Life and that which is to come, that they may live well, diſcreetly, innocently, beneficiently, profitably to their Neighbour, pleaſingly to God, comfortably to themſelves here, with peace and well-grounded repoſe and joy, being prepared for

for a more perfect and happy Life in Heaven. Further, that they may have their Sins pardoned, true repentance for them inſtilled, obedience and holy reſolution excited and confirmed in them; that they might love God, be grateful to their Friends, forbear and forgive, and do good to their Enemies, even to all, encourage Virtue and Goodneſs, check and reſtrain Vice and ill-doing prudently in their place and calling, and with all ſincerity for the good of the World. That they might not that day be malicious, uncharitable, ſelfiſh, proud, ambitious, envious, revengeful, vain-glorious, wrathful, ſenſual, laſcivious, intemperate, drunken, prophane by lewd ſwearing, irreverent towards God, or commit any other ſin they know themſelves to be moſt particularly in danger of. That they might be proſpered in worldly affairs, and delivered from the evils of Body, Name, Eſtate, as ſhall ſeem moſt fit to God. And ſo in like manner to give thanks for any of the good things they have received. I ſay, what ſhould hinder moſt men generally in ſome length or other from doing this in the morning, and ſo likewiſe again at night, if they had a mind to it? Why may we not apply our minds to theſe things in a morning firſt (except upon an extraordinary occaſion) as well as to laſcivious objects or worldly affairs, or the

con-

contrivance, it may be, of ſome ſin, ſome evil action or other? *My voice ſhalt thou hear* (or hear thou) *in the morning, O Lord, in the morning will I direct my Prayer* (or my ſelf) *unto thee*, &c. And *Evening and Morning and at Noon will I pray and cry aloud. Pſalm* 5. 3. and *Pſalm* 55. *Verſe* 17. ſaith *David*. Theſe places indeed do not prove he did this always, or conſtantly uſed theſe ſtated times: but the firſt of them proves plainly at leaſt that he did it in the morning *ſometimes*, and the ſecond more probably. *Evening, Morning and Noon* may be alſo a ſynechdochical Expreſſion for praying to God very frequently and at all times when he had occaſion. And ſo when it is ſaid *ſeven times a day I will praiſe thee*, may be meant only very often, and that it is likely by Ejaculatory Praiſes too, or that upon ſome days he might ſolemnly perform it juſt ſo many times. And ſo that in the *Theſſalonians*, 1*ſt. Epiſt.* 5 *Chap.* 17 *Verſe. Pray without ceaſing* [ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε] is either meant of Praying for every kind of thing, as it follows in the next *Verſe* [*in every thing give thanks.*] And *Philip.* 4 *Verſe* 6. *In every thing*, &c. or praying very frequently, eſpecially Ejaculatory Prayers; or praying to the end of our Lives; it is a Duty which will never here be needleſs, or to be left off. To do thus conſtantly and frequently would much keep men ſober,

ſober, diſcreet, conſciencious, upright the following day, and conſequently alſo fit them for God's Bleſſing in all their other affairs, and conſequently make them be joyous and chearful, and benignly diſpoſed: whereas popping in now and then a Prayer, eſpecially before a Sacrament, or on a Lord's day (times which none that are ſo much engaged in worldly affairs ſhould omit by any means) will do much leſs good, and the Influence ſoon wear out and be forgot, and then moſt of the Interval they are as bad as ever, and never the better. Finally, We may all take this adviſement and remember it, that whatever our affairs are, and how much-ſoever they neceſſarily hinder our thus worſhipping of God and this our Duty towards him; yet we are to take care this be not with our conſent, that we are not content therewith, ſo as not to watch for an opportunity otherwiſe to diſpoſe them, and not to look upon it as an unhappineſs; let it not be want of good-will in us by no means; but let us be ſo diſpoſed that we would do it withal our heart, and much oftner, if we could, we believing it manifeſtly our perfection to be more immediately employed in ſpiritual things, and to converſe with God. And I little doubt but that he that is ſo diſpoſed will ſoon find ſometimes or other, to perform this his reaſonable Duty to God.

We

We are to do this too as often as other affairs which are not of greater concernment may permit. And in this bodily Life in which we are, ſuppoſing it ought to be maintained, many called little affairs conſidered without their conſequences, conſidered with them are great matters. As due times and qualities and quantities of meat, drink, habitation, ſleep, &c. for without theſe no living; our bodies will not be upheld, nor fit for Prayer, nor any thing either ſpiritual or corporal to do it to any good purpoſe. And we may contract by ill uſe of theſe or want of theſe many evil diſpoſitions of mind, as moroſity, diſcontent, too much ſcrupuloſity, ſuperſtition, ſuſpicion of our ſelves and others, a belief that every thing that is in us is bad, never looking at any thing that is good in us, or thinking it is not ſo, fearfulneſs, unactiveneſs, peeviſhneſs; ſo that it may be and full oft is of greater concernment to mind theſe ordinary affairs, neceſſities or conveniencies of this bodily life, than directly to pray. And if we do all theſe things with diſcretion, and that we may be more fitted to ſerve and pleaſe God by doing this way as we think the moſt good to the World we can, we do an act of Obedience and conſequently of Worſhip to God.

But, alas! this extreme of Praying more than

than the neceſſity of other affairs will permit, is but rare in compare with the other of ſeldom or never praying, eſpecially in this irreligious and prophane Generation. How many are there who have hardly ever vouchſafed that they can remember One, *O God*, or ſo much as a *Lord bleſs me* ſeriouſly, except prophanely or cuſtomarily? much leſs do they ever allot a minute or two ſometimes to ſay with any underſtanding and affection any ſhort Prayer. And as for the Publick either they come thither not at all, but like Brute Beaſts lie ſotting and ſwilling or ſleeping at home: or when they come they poſſibly pray ſometimes as little as thoſe that are at home, or as the ſeats they ſit upon, or very gravely and imperiouſly they contemn it as below their wiſdom or their great mind; contrary to the practice of all even the moſt barbarous and ignorant Heathens of all ages, who all of them ever have had ſome things which they called God's (except ſome late Relations ſhould be true) which they thought could do them good or harm, to Worſhip; acknowledging, praiſing, thanking and praying to them. A ſign that the thing is ſo evidently uſeful and conſequently reaſonable to all who want any good thing they are capable of, and yet cannot give it themſelves, and know any other being who can; that the moſt ſtupid

of

of Mankind are not ignorant, or negligent of it.

SECT. VIII.

IV. THE Fourth Qualification is, that our Prayers be ſeaſonable, both the performance of the Duty of Prayer in general containing all the parts before mentioned, and alſo all the ſeveral parts thereof. And by *ſeaſonable* I mean, that both the whole and ſuch parts thereof be then uſed, when they do the moſt good; when they will do more good than to omit them, or to do another thing, or to uſe another part of Prayer in their place. The ſeaſon or opportunity of every action is when it will do more good than the omiſſion thereof, or another action in its place and time; and the beſt ſeaſon is when it will do moſt good, more than the omiſſion thereof.

And (1.) That the whole action or performance (of ſet Prayer which requires any ſet time or place I ſpeak principally) be ſeaſonable. For while we are in this fleſhly life, ſuppoſing it our duty to maintain our ſelves in it, or rather to do all the good we can (which is God's ſervice in this fleſhly life) and as long as we can, there are a multitude of things in their times of more good effect

effect than praying at the ſame time would be, as I have before ſaid. Such are our food, ſleep, exerciſe, and that in ſuch certain quantity or quality: For without theſe we either cannot at all ſubſiſt in this life, or very untowardly with diſtempers, pains, dulneſs, indiſpoſedneſs to the beſt actions of ſoul, and conſequently even theſe in Prayer. In general we muſt and ought to take ſo much care of, and allow ſo much attendence and time to our bodies that they may be the fitteſt inſtruments for our ſouls, that they may the leaſt hinder, and the moſt permit or help or diſpoſe them to the moſt perfect actions they are capable of; and conſequently whereby while we are in this body we may do the moſt good. And this is as various and diverſe as there are perſons. For ſome perſons tempers and conſtitutions may be ſo happy as that a little attendence to their body ſerves turn, and the reſt of their time they may ſpend in more immediately momentous actions. Others again may be of ſo unhappy and weakly a one, that moſt of their time muſt neceſſarily be employed about their bodies, that they may have ſome and but a ſmall time for the more uſeful and excellent actions of life, ſuch as Prayer contains; and if they did not ſpend ſo much time about their bodies they ſhould be able to ſpend yet leſs or none

at

at all about their ſouls. And yet even theſe perſons if they do but *ultimately* propoſe to themſelves ſincerely to do all the good they are able for, and to pleaſe God thereby, ſo far as they do ſo are very innocent and ſinleſs. And if they mightily deſire and earneſtly wiſh they were able to do the greateſt good as much as the moſt knowing, ſtrong or powerful, or are in ſincerity ſtrongly reſolved and bent if they had never ſo much power they would uſe it all to ſerve and pleaſe God by doing good with it; I ſay, if they be thus affected (which is but rare for want of uſe in perſons who cannot employ their minds much and often and attentively about Moral and Divine things) they are moſt excellently virtuous and good; and, it may be, more than thoſe which can ſpend more time in ſet Prayer, and ſincerely and fervently performed too. Some of theſe very weakly perſons being often indifferent and little concerned for worldly things by uſing themſelves to the propoſal of this end and moſt frequently attending to it even in their ſmall actions of life, and by God's immediate influence may arrive to as great or a greater degree of Virtue than thoſe who can ſpend more time even in ſet Prayers duly performed; much more ſtill if there want the due end thereof or ſincerity, and fervency.

It

It is not ſeaſonable for perſons to ſet themſelves to pray premeditated, *extempore* or any other long Prayers when they want ſtrength through paſt bodily or intellectual toil and labour, or ſickneſs and infirmity; for men will then do little good by their Prayers, and alſo, it may be, indiſpoſe themſelves to do twenty times more afterwards both by their Prayers and otherwiſe, whilſt they contract more Diſtempers and Infirmities of Body, or in general more ineptneſs to do any good. Meer dulneſs indeed may be overcome by Reſolution, and it may be good ſomtimes ſo to do, but weakneſs cannot.

Nor is it ſeaſonable when a man's mind is filled with other thoughts of lawful or neceſſary buſineſs and in purſuit thereof to uſe a long premeditated or *extempore* Prayer. The moſt ſeaſonable Prayers then would be ſome Form and frequent Ejaculations. There are alſo a multitude of other actions whereby at certain times we may do more good, of which in the ſum there will be greater good effect than if we prayed at thoſe times; as Reading, Meditation, Study or Converſation any ways to inform our ſelves with the moſt uſeful knowledge of God, his Nature and Providence, of the Revelation of his Will by Chriſt or our Chriſtian Religion, of our ſelves, of Humane Nature,

what men are, what they ſhould be, how they come to be ſo bad or ignorant or erroneous, how they might come to be better or wiſer. One good effect of which knowledge is to make us more able and fit to pray as we ought, and according to thoſe very directions that I have and ſhall give, that we may pray things juſt, true, important, the moſt general good things, and the greateſt variety of particular ones; that our minds may be well furniſhed with theſe things; that we may pray ſincerely, fervently, as frequently as we can, and ſeaſonably; that we may well expreſs and convey both our ſenſe and affections to others with whom we pray. And indeed one Reaſon why this Duty hath been of late ſo ill, ſo uſeleſly, offenſively and miſchievouſly performed, and ſo may likewiſe hereafter again is, becauſe ſome men have been perpetually praying, and ſpent ſo much time in the performance of this Duty, but little or none in the reflection upon it, or examination of it, according to ſuch Rules as I now propoſe; and much leſs in the ſtudy and conſideration of thoſe things and others juſt now mentioned.

There are times likewiſe of doing more good by relieving the indigent and deſerving perſons with what they moſt want, of viſiting the ſick, of inſtructing, reproving, exhort-

exhorting, reconciling and determining of differences, of any ways helping or aſſiſting another in any of his affairs. A Thouſand other ways there are of doing good which have alſo their times, that is, they are then in ſuch circumſtances the beſt we can do, or we can do the moſt good thereby. Now if when we ſhould be doing theſe things we ſhould betake our ſelves to praying it would be unſeaſonable. Moreover, in order to the getting or preſerving or encreaſing our power or ability to do good either to our ſelves or others, and conſequently to ſerve God; more particularly in order to the obtaining preſerving or augmenting the good things of Food, Raiment, Habitation, Reſt, and conſequently Health and Strength, Liberty, (not being a Servant to others by Debts, Engagements) Good-name, Authority, opportunity and leiſure of gaining Inſtruction and Knowledge and Virtue by Reading, Meditation, Conference, finally Riches, by which all theſe things are wholly obtained, or in part; I ſay, in order to this, every perſon hath ſome Calling, ſome Action of Life or other to which he moſtwhat applies himſelf, and the former good things are the reward or ſome way the effect of his diligence and honeſty therein. In this it is the greateſt part of mens lives are taken up. How much of a mans life is to

be ſpent therein, and when it will do moſt good to employ himſelf there and when elſewhere, every mans own ſincere prudence (as it muſt in all the other actions before recited) governed by reaſon, experience, advice of the moſt ſober, diſcreet, wiſe and virtuous men muſt only determine. This in general is certain, that it is not of beſt effect for men to fill up all their Lives with the affairs of their Calling, and to leave no room for the Worſhipping of God by praying to him, and then either think really or pretend there is no ſeaſon at all: and yet we may alſo be too mindleſs of them. For Example, It would be unſeaſonable to ſet apart a day of praying, and it may be for a good Harveſt among other things, when we ſhould be reaping; to be ſtanding ſtill and praying for deliverance from a danger when we ſhould be flying from it. We are not to be praying with ſet and long Prayers (Ejaculatory may always be uſed) for any good thing, or prevention or removal of any evil, when we ſhould be endeavouring, not deſiring when we ſhould be doing. We are not to be like the man, who ſeeing a houſe falling upon his head falls upon his knees and crys out God help him and deliver him, but will not ſtir out of the place. There is indeed but little danger hereof in temporal and ſenſible good things, but in ſpiritual, I doubt,

doubt, it is frequent, where men perhaps pray much and often to God to be ſanctified, to be ſecured from God's wrath or the effects of his anger, but take no care and uſe no endeavour at any time to obtain the one or prevent the other. Some of that very time, poſſibly, may be better and more ſeaſonably ſpent in meditating, conſidering, watching, reſolving, informing, inculcating things upon themſelves. Moſt commonly this abſence of all endeavours is a ſign of formality, or of want of ſincerity, or at leaſt of fervency in our Prayers. Sometimes indeed in perſons of a more movable and changable temper there may be in their Prayers ſome real flaſhes of ſtrong affections without any conſequent endeavour; the next minute almoſt thoſe thoughts and affections being forgotten and they being as much taken up and affected with the variety of any other objects which ſucceed.

2. Our Prayers are to be ſeaſonable as to the parts or ſeveral Ingredients. Sometimes a greater part of a Prayer may be ſpent in acknowledgments; as when our minds are dull and inſenſible of the Perfections and Excellencies of God, of our entire dependence upon him, of our being perfectly at his diſpoſe, of our own inſufficiency to be or do any the leaſt thing for our ſelves without him: then, I ſay, we may more particu-

larly and largely take notice of and acknowledge the Divine Perfections and our own Imperfections. Sometimes Confeſſions of Sins and Petition for ſtrength to amend and for forgiveneſs may be moſt ſeaſonably enlarged; as upon ſuch times as prudently are appointed for a publick and ſolemn Repentance as it were of any number and company together. The ſame may be done ſeaſonably by perſons in ſecret and retiredly by themſelves. Sometimes Thankſgiving may be moſt ſeaſonably inſiſted upon, an enumerating of the many favours and bleſſings of God with correſpondent affections of thanks and love therefore, producing the effects of Obedience, Reſolutions and Endeavours to pleaſe God. It may ſometimes be the beſt to ſpend moſt of the time in Petition, to do it very particularly, yet in things of concernment, and which we moſt want.

3. Our Prayers are to be ſeaſonable as to the particular Inſtances of theſe parts or Ingredients. Thus ſometimes it may be ſeaſonable in acknowledgment moſt to inſiſt upon God's Power or Wiſdom or Goodneſs, or ſome ſingle Inſtances of any of theſe his Attributes: to mention others may be impertinent or unſeaſonable, it may exclude thoſe things which would do more good. Of this we cannot want Inſtances in the ſeveral

veral occaſions of addreſſes to God both in publick forms and private uſages of our lives, where notwithſtanding they are oft too generally or improperly uſed. To give thanks and petition very particularly and copiouſly for many things, when the occaſion is ſpecial for one thing (as at meat) is moſt-what unſeaſonable: but to do it for the benefit then received is ſeaſonable. To confeſs ſome Sins with thoſe who are not guilty of them is unſeaſonable; or if they be, to do it too particularly, and when it would be interpreted to proceed from Pride or Envy, then to mention ſuch things would be unſeaſonable. To confeſs thoſe Sins which the perſon and company have been truly moſt guilty of, which are the moſt frequently committed, and yet it may be the moſt unobſerved by them, and they are the moſt inſenſible of them may be ſeaſonable. To pray for what we do not want is unſeaſonable. As to pray to God to deliver us from our great Enemies, and ſave us, when we have none we know to invade us, and therefore to imitate thoſe which have. To pray for thoſe things which we cannot uſe well now if we had them, and to neglect thoſe things which we do moſt want, and which in our circumſtances we could beſt uſe would be unſeaſonable: but contrariwiſe in the place of ſuch Petitions always

to pray for thoſe things we want and can then beſt uſe is to petition ſeaſonably. In general it is certain ſome things are to be pray'd for at one time, and ſome at another, ſome in one company private or publick, and ſome in another. The variety is infinite, every mans prudence muſt determine. He will be better provided ſo to do if he do but attend to and remember, that he is to do every thing when it may do moſt good, and more than any other thing he could at that time do in its place.

4. Let our Prayers be ſeaſonable as to ſome Adjuncts of Prayer, ſuch as vehemency or intenſeneſs and length, *&c.* As for Example, Let not our deſires (and ſo any other Ingredient of our Prayers) be ſo vehement and intenſe in things of ſmall importance and uſe as in great, for ſo we ſhall make no difference. In length let us not be long when other Actions and Company are deſigned, and expect us after a very little time, of which it is eaſie to give inſtances.

Finally, This ſeaſonableneſs in all theſe reſpects and many more, is left to the prudence of every particular perſon to be directed by his own reaſon, experience and obſervation, the example and advice of diſcreet and good perſons. In this and all other actions if a man doth as he judgeth he ought to do, and his end be always ſincerely

to

to do the beſt he underſtands, and he deſires to do the moſt good and be the moſt ſerviceable to God, he never ſins: and ſuch a perſon is always ready to be adviſed and informed for the beſt. It is manifeſt too, what need there is of Prudence as in all our Actions, ſo in this more eſpecially of Prayer, that it in all the reſpects mentioned may be ſeaſonably performed; and that ſometimes it may not be ſo unſeaſonably, as to do more hurt than good by excluding ſomething better out of its place.

5. We Chriſtians who know and believe what Jeſus Chriſt is and hath taught muſt always make our Petitions in the Name of the *Lord Jeſus*, that is, for his ſake, to honour him, and conſequently the eminent and illuſtrious merits of his exact obedience to God and of his ſpotleſs and generous Virtue and Holineſs for our encouragement to our imitation. That ſeems to be part of the ſenſe of thoſe Expreſſions of our Saviour, *John* 14. 13. 14. *Whatſoever ye ſhall ask in my Name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son: If ye ask any thing in my Name I will do it.* And indeed it is highly reaſonable, that ſince we have all been more or leſs ſinners, the puniſhment for our ſins (which is at leaſt the deprivation of God's favour) upon our true repentance ſhould be remitted, and conſequently all the poſitive

in-

ſtances of God's favour and good-will (of which the granting our Petitions is a very comprehenſive one) ſhould be afforded us for the ſake and honour of ſuch a perfectly holy and virtuous perſon as Jeſus was. That which eaſily might be made appear more diſtinctly if it were here neceſſary or proper. And ſo much may ſuffice at preſent for the due Qualifications of our Actions or Operations of Soul in Prayer.

SECT. IX.

I Proceed to the due Qualifications of the Signs to be uſed in our Prayers, the Signs both of the Senſe or Objects in our Prayers, and of the Actions or Operations of our Souls converſant about them. Theſe as hath been before ſaid are either Speech or Geſtures. Among Geſtures are to be reckoned all other qualities of our Speech beſides the articulateneſs of it, called *Words*, by which our Conceptions or Thoughts are ſignified: ſuch as are acuteneſs and gravity, intenſneſs and remiſsneſs or loudneſs and lowneſs, ſwiftneſs and ſlowneſs, equality and inequality, *&c.*

To obſerve ſome Directions concerning theſe, eſpecially concerning Speech, may not be altogether uſeleſs to thoſe who compoſe

poſe Prayers whether written or pronounced for others. But becauſe it concerns many ſuch who may be better able to direct themſelves, I ſhall be very brief in them. Thoſe which I ſhall mention at preſent ſhall be theſe Eight.

(1.) The firſt and moſt general one, is that the ſigns both of our Senſe and Operations of Soul, of what we ſay and what we do in Prayer may the beſt convey the things deſigned to be ſignified to the Auditours, or Readers if they be written: that they may cauſe them the moſt perfectly to conceive and underſtand our thoughts, paſſions, and other operations of our minds. This is the only uſe of Signs, and all their goodneſs conſiſts in this.

SECT. X.

(2.) And more particularly as a means to this general End, let theſe Signs, *viz.* Speech and Geſture be ſuch as do not take off the mind either of him who recites or compoſes the Prayer, or of others who joyn with him from the things ſignified. Which they may do two ways. (1.) By too much pleaſing *abſolutely* in themſelves, or by ſome other qualities in them beſides

beſides their aptneſs to ſignifie, as by their novelty, modiſhneſs, variety, *&c.* theſe full often may make greater impreſſions upon us than the things ſignified. Such oft-times are words and phraſes of the neweſt faſhion, and uſed by perſons whoſe acquaintance or converſe is eſteemed honourable; ſuch are ſtyles with a very careful juſtneſs of number, ſound, poſition of ſyllables and words in each ſentence or period; ſuch are many figurative ſpeeches: where partly the things themſelves from whence they are taken, as that they are ſublime, vaſt, unwonted, ſtrange, difficult; partly the qualities in the compoſer of which they are ſigns, as of good invention, perception and judgment, having read the beſt Authors, *&c.* may ſo much affect men with admiration, eſteem or delight as to intercept and detain their attention from the thing firſt deſigned to be ſignified and to cauſe them to be little or nothing regarded. And accordingly it may be often obſerved, that in a Sermon or Prayer the Language and Expreſſion is remembred and commended, when the Senſe or Matter, eſpecially if it be practical, is quite forgotten as a thing not worthy to be taken notice of. It is true, all the acceptable qualities and ornaments of Speech are laudable in a performance where it is deſigned to entertain and pleaſe men with them. For it argues

gues a good Judgment of the fitneſs of the means for the end, as in Poetry Orations and feigned Hiſtories: but they are very ſparingly at leaſt to be uſed in thoſe Exerciſes whoſe end is quite another thing, *viz.* the conveyance of Divine Thoughts and Affections. This fault is committed commonly by perſons who are either imprudent or vain, either thoſe who are not adviſed of the end of ſuch religious Dutys as Prayer, or if they be they cannot reſtrain themſelves from uſing whatſoever they eſteem themſelves for, and think they ſhall pleaſe others with.

But (2.) on the other hand theſe Signs may take off our minds from the things ſignified by offending and diſpleaſing. Such are in general all ſuch as ſignifie together with the thing to be conveyed ſome conſiderable imperfection in him that conveys, which alſo are called indecent. More particularly, ſuch are affected Words and Geſtures, too vulgar and ſlovenly Similitudes from Shops and Trades and Childrens Affairs, Words uſed ill by the ruder and meaner ſort of people, ſome ſorts of Tones and Flexions of Voice. Theſe things ſignifie vanity and oſtentation, a meanneſs of mind, one much converſant about and affected with mean things and yet not diſcerning it, rudeneſs, incivility, ſometimes ſomething bordering

dering upon ſenſuality, puſillanimity, ſuperſtition, or too great fear of little things, want of wiſdom and generoſity. All which and ſuch like diſpleaſe, offend, raiſe contempt or pity in the Auditours of moſt underſtanding. If at any time our prudence ſhould judge it neceſſary to uſe ſomething like ſuch Expreſſions to ſome perſons, it ſhould be ſo done as to ſignifie withal our condeſcenſion, and our prudential choice of them by reaſon of the imperfection of the perſons who occaſion it.

SECT. XI.

(3.) LEt the ſigns of our Conceptions, Affections, *&c. viz.* Speech and Geſture be ſuch as may rather ſomewhat pleaſe and invite the mind to attend to them and conſequently much more to the things ſignified. Such are Words and Phraſes which are the moſt proper, that is, which are uſed to ſignifie any one thing and no other: ſuch alſo are Metaphors or Similitudes where the terms are very like, and which are very well known and underſtood. By theſe men conceive diſtinctly, clearly, eaſily what we would convey to them: all which pleaſe the mind and conſequently cauſe it longer to employ it ſelf thus, and more

more to attend. Such, laſtly, is that commonly called *plain* ſpeech; that is, that which very perfectly conveys and ſignifies the things to be ſignified, which is the principal and ſubſtantial uſe of ſpeech, without any or with very few and thoſe the moſt ordinary ornaments thereof; ſuch therefore which hath nothing which doth offend or is unacceptable, but yet hath very little beſides the ſubſtantial and chief uſe of ſpeech to pleaſe or delight. This language is commonly uſed by plain men, that is, thoſe who uſe Language as they do Clothes principally for warmth and conveniency, following the faſhion and uſing the modiſh Ornaments thereof only ſo far as not to offend or to render their company acceptable, but rather to be ſomewhat agreeable. All which is a ſign of diſcretion and good government, that one knows what is of great and what is of ſome though but of little good effect, and accordingly prizes and eſteems it. Which very thing again begets a good opinion of the ſpeaker or compoſer and conſequently much diſpoſeth to attend to and approve what he ſhall deliver.

In the number of pleaſing and acceptable ſigns in a Prayer pronounced, are good deportment and geſture: amongſt which may be truly reckoned all properties of ſpeech beſides its articulation, as is before ſaid: ſuch

ſuch as vehemency and ſoftneſs or elevation and depreſſion, quickneſs and ſlowneſs, equality and inequality, the poſitions or ſites of theſe called accent and tone. All which if they ſeem to be natural and not affected or counterfeited may be ſigns of ſome worthy and uſeful quality in us, ſuch as ſeriouſneſs, gravity, ſincere and earneſt deſire to do good, of ſome degree of wiſdom or goodneſs, *&c.* Theſe are to be uſed at the ſame time with our ſpeech or ſigns of our conceptions, and to accompany them to cauſe perſons to attend thereto in ſuch manner as is aforeſaid.

SECT. XII.

IV. THe ſigns of the conceptions and operations of our Souls, *viz.* Speech and geſture ought to be the moſt univerſal: that is to all our Auditors and Readers as much as may be. Let them be ſuch therefore as are uſed by the generality of *them* and moſt frequently. It is beſt to uſe the moſt common and received words among them to ſignifie our meaning by: And if we can find none, (as often we ſhall not when our conceptions are and ought to be more diſtinct) we muſt come the neareſt we can and take thoſe which are moſt related

lated to ſome other that are uſed. If an Auditory be mixed (as all are more or leſs and much more the number of Readers) and one kind of words may ſignifie better to ſome perſons, and others again better to others, then varriety of them more or leſs is moſt convenient to be uſed. There are alſo other prudent reaſons of variety of expreſſions ſometimes: As becauſe one and the ſame perſon may not underſtand anothers entire ſenſe by any one phraſe but only one part of it; but by more he may underſtand the whole. So alſo one may underſtand anothers entire ſenſe by one phraſe but *obſcurely*; but by another added thereto *more clearly*. Accordingly we ſee men practiſe in ordinary converſation, that where they have a mind to have themſelves well underſtood, and ſuſpect one or more perſons do not underſtand them they uſe variety of ſpeech and geſture too.

Another reaſon of variety may be its uſefulneſs for attention and memory and affection. A man oftner and longer attends to the ſame thing ſignified by two or three expreſſions than by one: and then more attention makes a greater impreſſion, and the thing is better remembred. A thing expreſſed by one word or phraſe only, another immediarely ſucceeding, is oft-times quite miſſed or ſo ſlightly attended to that it is

not at all remembred. Whence moſt of the things ſo delivered do but little good. This is alſo a reaſon of repetition of the ſame words or phraſes.

Againſt this rule do they offend who chuſe words and phraſes unknown to all or the greateſt part of an Auditory when there are other well known to them which might have been taken. Such are words newly made out of a Foreign Language when there are as good in our own; or thoſe which are indeed in our own Language, but are not uſed at all by our preſent Auditors, but by another ſort of perſons only as Scholars or Courtiers ſuppoſe.

The like may be in geſtures or ſigns of our affections, *&c.* we may uſe thoſe in a mechanick or ruſtick Auditory which only ſignifie to thoſe of ſcholaſtick or gentile converſation.

Calmneſs and equableneſs of ſpeech and geſture (for Example) would ſignifie to theſe laſt ſort of perſons ſerious and long attention to, ſteady and conſtant affection for what one ſaith; but men of more active tempers, which are far the greateſt number, will hardly believe him that uſeth it to be at all in earneſt, to mind and be affected much with what he ſaith they will think him dull; becauſe always when they themſelves or thoſe with whom they have generally

rally converſed have been ſeriouſly and much concerned for any thing, they have accuſtomed themſelves to be loud and unequal in their ſpeech, and quick, fierce, multifarious in their geſtures. In ſuch caſe it may be adviſable to uſe in part only thoſe geſtures which thoſe men do and that with ſome marks of condeſcenſion, whereby a man may convey his ſenſe and affections to them; and yet not confirm them in their bad uſage, but rather admoniſh them of their imperfection. For indeed they are not only ſigns but cauſes too of ſtrong and ungovernable paſſions moſt commonly for little things; and conſequently of raſh and blind actions. Rude and vulgar ſpeech and carriage are commonly the cauſes of rude and vulgar manners.

But there is no greater breach of this direction than to make Prayers in a Foreign Tongue. For here the words are ſo far from being ſigns of conceptions to all the Auditory, that they are ſigns to none at all, perhaps. And this is the foul fault of that Church which pretends to ſo much wiſdom and care in all her Conſtitutions, when hardly any thing can argue a greater folly and tyranny.

Of this they have heard enough: though their pride and other ſelf-intereſts will never ſuffer them to acknowledge or amend any

thing though never ſo fooliſh and miſchievous which others ſhall admoniſh and adviſe them of. Nay, theſe men do not only appoint thoſe who pray with others to uſe ſuch a Language wich the Auditors do not underſtand, but alſo private perſons to pray *Pater Noſter's*, *Ave Maria's* and *Gloria Patri's* (a judicious Prayer indeed, for they uſe it for Petition too) when ſometimes they underſtand not one Sentence of what they ſay.

SECT. XIII.

(5.) LEt the ſigns of all the operations and actions of our Soul, particularly of our affections be the moſt natural. Such which are conjoyned in men generally with the things ſignified even without their wills or endeavours, nay, they are not diſjoyned without ſome difficulty. Theſe ſigns more certainly convey to others not only the *knowledge* or *conception* of the affections which are in us; but alſo the like *affections themſelves:* nay, ſometimes they may be the cauſe of and excite, maintain or increaſe affections in our ſelves. For which reaſons as well as others all inſtituted and appointed ſigns are to be the moſt natural, and as little as may be purely arbitrary. Theſe laſt are very

very often ſeparated from the thing ſignified which is called *formality.*

A common inſtance too of the unnaturalneſs of the ſignification of our affections, *&c.* is that we call *over-doing*, *i. e.* too many and too great a vehemency of geſtures and words, as it ſeems to moſt Auditors. Theſe although ſometimes in ſome perſons that uſe them they may be ſigns natural enough to themſelves of good affections (for there are degrees in reſpect of time and perſons) yet by the generality of Auditors they are judged to proceed from oſtentation or meer heat of bodily temper.

And here we may be admoniſhed that we do not uſe thoſe which are very natural ſigns to the generality of an Auditory hypocritically; that we do not uſe them on purpoſe to beget in them a good opinion of us and to judge that we have ſuch good affections or other worthy qualities in us when we have not, nor care, perhaps, much whether we have them at all really, ſo we may but ſeem ſo. We may be further adviſed that they do not proceed from or are conſequent upon meerly the heat, motion, agitation, temper of body. For there are ſome perſons in whom ſighs, tears, loudneſs or vehemency of ſpeech (for Example) do not proceed from nor are conjoyned with their reſpective paſſions of ſadneſs, grief, earneſt

deſire towards any certain objects apprehended evil or good: but meerly from the frame and temper, or in one word, from the mechaniſm of their body: they cannot tell you what it is that ſo affects them. In others again they are very eaſie and great from every ſmall degree of real paſſion in them. We may ſee in their abundance of tears, deep and frequent ſighs, great vehemency and variety of ſpeech and geſture, whence generally we may think they are brim-full of extraordinary paſſions, when in truth it is not ſo: and either there is none of thoſe paſſions at all, or but in very mean and ſlight degree.

Thoſe that affect and endeavour theſe natural ſigns of ſanctity in Prayers, and ſo in Preaching and all other their Converſation, without the things ſignified for reputation and good opinion or any other ſelf-intereſt are Hypocrites in intention and deſign: The other in whom they proceed from other cauſes than thoſe they for the moſt part naturally ſignifie, but without their will or endeavour are Hypocrites only in event and effect: They both often deceive the World: but the *firſt* more ſeldom and chiefly by their own fault, the *ſecond* more frequently and by others fault, *viz.* by reaſon of their ignorance, and thinking thoſe ſigns univerſal which are not: and oft-times they are diſcovered,

vered, especially by more observing Auditors: which, when it happens, offends much and causeth them to be averse from and not to attend to what shall be said by such persons.

All external signs used before there is the thing signified in us are not hypocritical; They may be prudently used on purpose to excite or increase good thoughts and affections in us, and to prevent the ill consequence of our bad example. As kneeling and intention of the voice may not only be signs of reverence and affection but also the causes; they may beget, preserve and increase them in our selves and others by our Examples. And it may be one good effect of a set Tone in Prayers as well as in other parts of Divine Worship to excite and signifie sutable affections.

SECT. XIV.

(6.) LEt the expressions or signs of our conceptions and thoughts convey them the most clearly in opposition to obscurity. Obscurity and confusion of perception of a thing are not the same. A man may see with his eye remote objects confusedly without distinction of their parts, yet strongly and clearly; and on the contrary

near objects very distinctly, but yet darkly or obscurely. And so it is in the minds perception of objects.

Contrary to this direction *generally* are Tropical Speeches, as *Metaphors*, *Metonymies*: by which names if we respect their Etymology all figurative speeches might be called. *i. e.* when a thing is signified or expressed not by a word proper to its *essential nature*; but by some one which is proper to something related to it; as its *cause*, *effect*, *part*, *like*, *contrary*. The use of this tropical speech seems to me to have been one of the greatest impediments of good knowledge in the World. I say *generally* not *always*, &c. For sometimes a man may better know the *cause*, *effect*, *or like of a thing* than its *essential nature*: and then it will be better to endeavour to convey the knowledge or conception of this *essential nature* by a word which properly signifies to him its *cause*, *effect*, *or like*, *&c.* and accordingly we often see that we are fain to describe, especially an intellectual thing by its likeness, effects, *&c.* to make some persons understand and conceive it. But I am slipping too far into a Philosophical Digression. To apply this direction more usefully. It is particularly to be observed, That many Scripture-Words and Phrases which are figurative though often used do not convey

their

their ſenſe to the generality of Auditors or Readers ſo clearly as proper words now in common uſe among us: both becauſe they are figurative and alſo becauſe the things from whence they are taken and other circumſtances of ſpeech are nothing near ſo well known to us now as they were then to thoſe to whom they were firſt ſpoken or written, or as the natures of the things themſelves. There are many Metaphors, Allegorys and other figurative ſpeeches of the Scripture, eſpecially of the Old Teſtament uſed ordinarily in Prayers and Sermons which people generally do not at all or very obſcurely and darkly underſtand. I am ſure they would far more clearly underſtand the ſenſe it ſelf deſigned to be ſignified by them if it were expreſſed by the moſt fit words of our own Language. Of this it were eaſie to give inſtances.

Moreover, Many things in the Scripture might have been more clearly by proper ſpeeches expreſſed even to thoſe to whom they were then delivered, if God had ſo pleaſed: but it might ſeem good to Divine Providence for many reaſons which we have not generally, that ſome things ſhould be delivered obſurely: as to excite mens diligence and endeavour to underſtand them, to detain mens employment about them longer, to give occaſion for mutual forbear-

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ance and charity in caſe of diſſenting. Nay, one reaſon might be that we might have the ſatisfaction of finding out and conveying the ſenſe more clearly to others. Wherefore when we uſe Scripture-Phraſes which are not clear enough of themſelves (as it may be often fit for the Authority and better memory of what we ſay, This Rule as well as the reſt having their exceptions) it will be moſt prudent for us to paraphraſe or to explicate them by the ſpeech moſt proper for the things now in uſe with us, of which ſome inſtances are given in a following Direction. Hereby alſo many confuſed and erroneous conceits in the ſenſe of Scripture would be prevented. The Holy Scripture is the moſt abuſed piece of writing extant that I know: and that not only by the unlearned always, and eſpecially of late (among us, but many times by ſome of the learned Fathers, Councels, Poſtillers. And if men ſhould have explicated and uſed the Text of *Ariſtotle* or the Terms of any Science with as little underſtanding as they do the Holy Scriptures they would have expoſed themſelves to ſhame enough. But becauſe the Holy Scriptures are of ſo mighty concernment to all ſorts of perſons, it is more reaſonably permitted to them to be more converſant therein though with great defects and follys: (which notwithſtanding men

are

are to prevent and mend all they can) that ſo they may have the greateſt benefits and advantages of the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures with the feweſt and leaſt inconveniencies.

SECT. XV.

(7.) LEt our words and phraſes the ſigns of our conceptions or thoughts be diſtinct in oppoſition to ambiguity and doubtfulneſs. Let them not be ſuch as may ſignifie in all the circumſtances with which they are ſpoken more things than one. Such are very many words and phraſes: and it is a principal defect of Language. I ſpeak not concerning the confuſedneſs complexneſs of our conceptions or thoughts (one of the chief defects of knowledge yet remaining to be remedied as much as the World can bear) but of the ſigns of them. If our thoughts be complex, confuſed, general, (as we may out of choice prepare only ſuch and not too ſubtle and diſtinct according as men are more or leſs capable) our words ſhould be thoſe which properly and diſtinctly ſignifie ſuch. Whether our conceptions be confuſed or diſtinct our words ſhould be ſuch as properly ſignifie them. But of this though but a little is enough in this place.

SECT.

SECT. XVI.

(8.) LEt not theſe ſigns and expreſſions be longer than are needful for the moſt perfect conveyance of Thoughts or Affections, *&c.* As,

(1.) Not more words when one would ſerve; not a Sentence (by which I mean now not a *Propoſition* but *many words)* when one word may be had, and eaſilier too, which may ſerve; a great uſage of our modern ſtyle, whereby a great deal of paper and time is ſpent oft-times to little or no purpoſe.

(2.) Not many different words or ſentences for the ſame thing, except for ſome ſuch reaſons as have and may be mentioned: as becauſe of the variety of Auditors, or to detain their attention longer, or for memory, or to ſignifie affection, or on purpoſe to obſcure a thing, or for any other reaſon which prudence may think fit. The multitude of ideas of words and ſentences confound, divert or blunt the perception and attention of the mind to the conception of the things ſignified.

(3.) Not more of the ſame words or ſentences for the ſame thing, or not the ſame repeated, called *Tautology*, when a man ſaith

ſaith the ſame thing in the ſame words. This doth in common uſe admit of frequent Exceptions. For it is better to uſe this *Tautology* than not, when the thing that is to be conveyed is very excellent, of great good uſe, and very neceſſary; for which there is and ought to be in the conveyer very great and ſomewhat laſting Affections or Paſſions: and conſequently his Attention to the thing it ſelf is ſo much and ſtrongly detained, that he neglects the alteration or variety of words to ſignifie it by, as if he had not time or leiſure for that. I ſay in ſuch caſe (which in Prayer is and ought to be a frequent thing) *Tautology* or repeating the ſame words for the ſame things is and ought to be uſed, and is a natural ſign of real and ſtrong affections for excellent things, and particularly for that thing where it was uſed. And thus we ſee it on purpoſe uſed in ſome ſet Forms. But contrariwiſe, it is not allowable when it is uſed in mean and and ſmaller things compared with others in Prayer, and to which not ſo great and laſting an Affection is to be given. For the time might have been better ſpent in attention to other things which might have ſucceeded. It is not allowable meerly to gain time or lengthen our Prayers to no better purpoſe than that it might be ſaid we pray'd ſo long.

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An Example of this *Tautology* is that frequent needleſs repetition of the ſame Appellation of God or the like in Prayer commonly taken notice of: The firſt fault of which is in the thoughts or conception, and proceeds from ignorance, ſlowneſs and dulneſs, or careleſsneſs, and conſequently ſcarcity of Invention or Memory. For want of ſomething to ſucceed a man repeats the ſame thing till ſomething elſe do come: And then for the ſame want of invention in words too, he repeats the ſame thing expreſſed by the ſame words. This *Tautology* as it ſpends time needleſly, ſo it offends alſo the Auditors, and diſpoſeth them at leaſt not to mind or attend to any thing the ſpeaker ſaith; either becauſe they judge it probable he will ſay nothing conſiderable; or that they might as it were puniſh him for, or diſcourage or diſapprove ſuch ignorance, dulneſs, ſlowneſs or careleſsneſs and negligence.

That adviſement of our Saviour's to his Diſciples, *that they ſhould not in their Prayers uſe vain Repetitions as the Heathens did, becauſe they thought they ſhould be heard for their much ſpeaking (Matth. 6. Verſe 7.)* as it may *in general* forbid all needleſs and unprofitable uſe of things or words in Prayer; ſo more *particularly*, as one Example or Inſtance of that general, to uſe, as the Heathens did, mul-

multitude of things and words (whether various or the ſame, whether properly *Tautology* or not) out of an opinion that that ſhould be the cauſe of their being heard, or ſhould procure them audience. And that either becauſe they thought their Gods might not preſently hear them, but might be employ'd about ſome other affair ſo as that they could not either know they prayed to them, or not be at leiſure to attend to them if they did: or becauſe they thought their Gods to be Imperious, that they would be much courted, and long waited upon, and would give their Oratours ſome tediouſneſs and trouble, being *ultimately* pleaſed in ſuch ſigns of ſuperiority above and being honoured by their worſhippers: (whence alſo they might uſe many Titles or Appellations of their Gods (conjectured by a learned man to be the [πλυλογία] *much ſpeaking*, mention'd by Chriſt, by which alſo they conceived their Gods would think themſelves more honoured) or becauſe, laſtly, they thought their Gods did not particularly know and underſtand all they wanted, if they propounded it only in general, and did not particularly explicate it unto them: And ſo their πολυλογία would be a very particular and minute petitioning. This laſt cauſe ſeems to be intimated from the 8*th Verſe* ſubjoyn'd as a reaſon why they ſhould not

not uſe vain repetitions (or rather vain and uſeleſs multitudes of words and things whether the ſame or not) *(viz.) becauſe their heavenly Father knew what things they had need of before they asked him.* The Heathens did not think or know certainly ſo concerning their Gods, but they believed that they might have need of their Information at leaſt ſometimes. Our Saviour therefore prohibits not all long Prayers but only ſuperfluity in general, nor all very particular petitioning of God, which is often extraordinary uſeful, but only to uſe it with the belief that by this means a man might be heard, and that otherwiſe God might know and underſtand his condition, and what in particular he wants, as the Heathens here probably did. This and all the former directions for our ſpeech and geſture as hath been ſuggeſted in ſome of them are but ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ and for the greateſt part. Now and then our general prudence whereby we direct all our actions to their laſt end of ſerving God and doing good may ſee good reaſon to depart from them. But this is not only to remember us that there are few, if any, Rules that have not their Exceptions; which moſt men take no notice of till an Objection obligeth them.

And thus have I diſpatch'd the firſt ſort of Directions concerning Prayer, *viz.* to ſuggeſt

geſt ſome conſiderable due Qualifications of Prayer, 1*ſt* Of the Things, 2*dly* Of the Signs. Of the Things, 1*ſt* Of the Objects or Senſe, 2*dly* Of the Actions or Operations of Soul in Prayer.

I know very well that there are many things in theſe laſt Directions concerning the Signs and Expreſſions of our Senſe and Operations of Soul in Prayer which are not peculiar thereto: but general things of good uſe particularly applied, and which one may never have the opportunity of diſcourſing in their due place may be allowed to be mentioned in a particular argument. I ſhall only juſt obſerve before I mention the ſecond ſort of Directions, that theſe Qualifications of Prayer mentioned will direct us to ſome conſiderable conveniencies and inconveniencies of Prayers, whereby we may be prepared in ſome meaſure to determine concerning ſeveral ſorts of Prayers compared, which is to be preferred, and in what reſpects. For Example, whether Prayers compoſed by ſome ſelected out of a National Church for a whole Nation and for an Age or two or more, conſtantly or frequently to be uſed, or Publick Forms of Prayers be beſt to be uſed in publick and private; or Prayers compoſed by a private perſon for his own conſtant or frequent uſe, or one each time he hath occaſion called premeditated Prayer;

or Prayers left to the felicity of the Invention, Memory, Inſpiration of private perſons, called *Extempore* Prayers. As if it ſhould be ſaid that generally ſpeaking (for all theſe things have exceptions and ſometimes very numerous ones) in reſpect of the truth, juſtice and importance of the ſenſe in Prayers, and of the beſt conveyance or ſignification thereof Publick Prayers are to be preferred: In reſpect of Extenſiveneſs in particulars and conſequently variety, Premeditated Prayer: In reſpect of the ſincerity in the Reciter and of fervency and ſeaſonableneſs, premeditated Prayers again. A premeditated Prayer only in reſpect of things and of their order, and not in reſpect of all the words and ſpeech (except one word or ſo as a ſign to the memory for a matter which may take up many ſentences to expreſs) which may be furniſhed by an habitual memory, ſeems to be better than with every one premeditated word or ſentence. For attending exactly to each word and ſentence and their order takes off the attention from the things, and conſequently our ſuitable affections even in compoſing the Prayer, but in reciting it by heart much more. The care or attention to thoſe particular expreſſions that they may come to memory and in ſuch an order, cauſe a man leſs to attend to and be affected with the things they ſignifie.

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But then this habitual memory of Language muſt be gained by more or leſs uſe and exercciſe. If this be not, for want of parts or time or diligence, it is better men ſhould premeditate every word, and keep themſelves thereto, than hefitate, falter, expreſs themſelves improperly, rudely, ſlovenly, childiſhly, or otherwiſe unfitly. But for *Extempore* Prayer in any length (I mean not ſhort Ejaculatory Prayers) the Inconveniencies in it are ſo much greater and the Conveniencies ſo much leſs than in Forms or Premeditated Prayers, that I do not ſee it is any where to be uſed where the other can: as I have before ſaid. Nor is it to be permitted to all even when there is no opportunity of uſing a Form or Premeditation, but only to perſons who have been and are of great conſideration and judgment concerning ſuch things as are to be the matter of our Prayers, and have well exerciſed themſelves therein, and conſequently are of copious and quick Invention, and Memory of true, juſt, uſeful things, and of convenient Speech to ſignifie or expreſs them.

All Conveniencies conſidered, poſſibly a mixture of Publick and Private Forms, and of Premeditated Prayers may be beſt, whereby the Inconveniencies in all may be corrected or remedied by each other, and the peculiar Conveniencies of all obtained,

especially if there be some discreet and pious Superiours frequently to take an account of, to hear and direct those who may be less sufficient when they perform this Duty in publick.

SECT. XVII.

II. I Am now to propound some of the Second sort of Directions, *viz.* How to obtain these due Qualifications of Prayer of which I have been discoursing, and they be these six or seven among others.

(1.) Read we much and understand well the Holy Scriptures that we may apply them truly and usefully to our own Cases. The least useful to this end (though there are many other excellent uses) are those Parts which are Controversial or Historical, except those which deliver the Actions, but especially the Speeches of Holy Persons, such as our Saviour's Discourses, amongst which are some Prayers, as our Saviour's and of some of the Apostles. The most useful are those which are Devotional: such as the Book of *Psalms*, out of which there are many truly excellent Examples of all the Parts or Ingredients of a Prayer, the circumstances being rightly understood, of which

which I have ſtill ſucceſſively made uſe: Alſo thoſe Parts which are Preceptive which contain Inſtructions for our Duty, what our Temper and Spirit, our Actions and Converſations ought to be, as the Book of *Proverbs*, our Saviour's Diſcourſes, many Chapters of the Epiſtles. I ſay, theſe are more uſeful for this end than thoſe which are controverſial, as moſt part of the *Epiſtle* to the *Romans*, and to the *Corinthians*, and *Galatians*, &c. though out of theſe too, much may be had. It were to be wiſhed, that with the Scripture there was always ſome ſhort and plain Paraphraſe to be read with it for the better underſtanding of its ſenſe, and that the Sentences thereof which are not plain might not be uſed ignorantly, confuſedly, falſly and erroneouſly. It is very well known, we may think we pray in Scripture when we do not, we may pray with the words of Scripture, but not with the ſenſe. As if praying *that we might not be conformed to this World*, we ſhould mean all other Chriſtians of different perſwaſions from our ſelves; and not the corrupt and ſinful manners of all men whatſoever which was then and is now generally the condition of Mankind in this World. Or Confeſſing *our very beſt doings are polluted rags*, we ſhould mean the beſt of the beſt man's actions; and particularly his ſincereſt and

ardenteſt love to God that he can at that time exert (which ſurely may be in one action) were a ſin: and not underſtand it of a Nation generally even in their religious performances, or the beſt of their actions formal, hypocritical, inſincere, *&c.* which was the ſenſe of thoſe words when ſpoken, and therefore in ſuch caſe to be uſed, or ſuch like inſtances. Wherefore we ſhould be careful rightly to underſtand and to have the true ſenſe of Scripture, and not through vain imagination, raſhneſs, confidence, ſelf-conceit abuſe the Language thereof: And where the ſenſe is doubtful, and pious, holy and wiſe men differ, rather to abſtain therefrom. We may find elſewhere expreſſions enough beſides for our ſenſe and meaning.

There are abundance of Scripture-Expreſſions very plain and clear in their ſenſe, and need no Paraphraſe or other words for their better underſtanding. As, *that we may live ſoberly, righteouſly, godly in this preſent world; that we may love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our Neighbour as our ſelves; that we might do God's will here on Earth as it is in Heaven; that he would cauſe us to be loving without diſſimulation, merciful with chearfulneſs, to abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good, to be kindly affectioned, in honour to prefer one another, fervent in Spirit ſerving*

ſerving the Lord (thoſe eſpecially whoſe Office it is to inſtruct in the Knowledge of the Doctrine and Deſign of the Lord Jeſus) *to be rejoycing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing inſtant in Prayer* (eſpecially when in the like condition with the perſecuted Chriſtians) *given to hoſpitality, to bleſs them that perſecute*, &c. as that moſt deliciouſly honeſt *Chapter* of *Romans*, the 12*th* goes on, and *Rom.* 13. And likewiſe *Coloſſ.* 3. and *Gall.* 5. Further, *that God would give us repentance unto life, that God would give us forgiveneſs of our Sins for his Name's ſake, who is the Propitiation for our ſins, and for the ſins of the whole world*, and ſcores the like. But if we uſe any Scripture-Phraſes obſcure and doubtful it is beſt as ſhort and clear as may be at the ſame time to Paraphraſe them, or expreſs them in our moſt known and therefore plain Language, as hath been before briefly adviſed. Thus by uſing our ſelves to Read much and rightly underſtand the Scriptures, we ſhall furniſh our ſelves with good ſtore of true, juſt, uſeful and important matter for our Prayers, though we ought, if we can, to judge what even Scripture-matter is moſt important and uſeful for us in particular: for there is great difference. Moreover, Scripture-Phraſe thus uſed is ſuch as doth invite to attend to the ſenſe of what is ſaid by the au-

thority thereof, becauſe ſpoken by Authors for whom we have worthily a great veneration, and we judge at leaſt directed and overſeen by God himſelf in their ſenſe and expreſſion. Scripture-Phraſes likewiſe which are plain are like to be ſo much the more clear and quickly underſtood, as they are more common and uſed; which is much more than any other.

I ſaid juſt now, where Scripture-Phraſes are obſcure, there it will be beſt as ſhortly and as clearly as we can to Paraphraſe them in other Phraſes moſt uſed and therefore beſt known what they ſignifie. As for Example, if we ſhould pray in Scripture-Language, that we might be *found in Chriſt*; that we may be *in Chriſt*, that we may *obtain Chriſt*, &c. we may add, that we may be ſincere, firm and conſtant believers or Chriſtians who may give our ſelves to obey the will of God ſent by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by believing all the Doctrine that he hath taught, and practiſing accordingly; not that we may be in a ſtate of favour with God for Chriſt's ſake; or that by his effectual procurement God would pardon our Sins, acquit us from Puniſhment; which though it be very true and to be pray'd for, yet it is not the ſenſe of thoſe Expreſſions. The ſenſe of *the Churches of* Judea *which were in Chriſt. Galat.* 1. *Verſe* 22. And *ſalute* Andro-

Andronicus *and* Junia, *&c. which were in Chriſt before me. Rom.* 16. 7. is, thoſe that were Chriſtians. So alſo if we pray that *Chriſt may be in us*, that he may *dwell in us*, that we may *put on Chriſt or the Lord Jeſus*, add we by way of Paraphraſe and more known Expreſſions, that we may firmly believe Jeſus to be the Holy One of God, and his Holy Doctrine to be true, that our ſelves may be deeply and conſtantly endued with thoſe moſt excellent qualities of ſuch Knowledge and Holineſs, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, which are the proper Effects of or according to the Doctrine and Example of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, which is the ſenſe of *Galat.* 3. *Verſe* 27. *As many as have been baptized into Chriſt have put on Chriſt*, that is, at leaſt have believed his Doctrine: And of *Rom.* 13. *Verſe* 14. *Put ye on the Lord Jeſus.* Hereby alſo, beſides the Sentences, the true ſenſe of thoſe Sentences of Scripture may be conveyed at the ſame time, which was moſtwhat well enough known to whom it was written, but is not yet among us, as it ſeems.

So alſo when we make our Acknowledgments of the Divine Attributes in Scripture-Sentences in Prayer, let us chooſe rather ſuch as are moſt plain, and therefore moſt proper, or as little figurative as may be. As, *Thou that knoweſt the hearts of all men*,

(Acts

(Acts 2.) *the ſearcher of hearts and tryer of reins. Thou art God which haſt made Heaven and Earth*, &c. (Acts 4.) *Great is the Lord and greatly to be praiſed, and his greatneſs is unſearchable. That the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him. That the Lord is gracious, full of compaſſion, ſlow to anger and of great mercy, good to all, and his tender mercies over all his works. Pſalm* 145. That he is our heavenly Father, the only true God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

When we uſe thoſe Expreſſions that are ſpoken of God Ανθρωποπαθῶς after the likeneſs of men it may be beſt to add at leaſt ſometimes ſome proper word or phraſe for explication and prevention of miſtake, eſpecially in vulgar apprehenſion. For Example, if we ſhould ſay *Thy Throne, O Lord, is in Heaven, thy eyes behold, thy eye-lids try the children of men. Pſalm* 11. *Verſe* 4. it may follow, In Heaven are the moſt excellent manifeſtations of thy preſence, of thy greatneſs and goodneſs: yet thou moſt exactly knoweſt all things here upon Earth and whatſoever is in man. If we ſhould ſay, *Thou, Lord, lookeſt from Heaven and beholdeſt all the ſons of men, from the place of thy habitation thou lookeſt upon all the Inhabitants of the Earth. Pſalm* 33. *Verſe* 13. we may add theſe or other more fit Expreſſions according to the Auditory; Thy Power and Knowledge, thy Providence

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is extended from Heaven to Earth, that is, every where. To thee, the effects of whose power, wisdom and goodness are the most perfect and great in the heavenly Regions, is also perfectly known whatsoever is here upon this Earth. When we say, *God is angry with the wicked and loveth the righteous*; we may add punisheth the one and willeth and doth good to the other. The Expressions of *The Lord is full of compassion* and *slow to anger* may be followed with, *The Lord doth plentifully and frequently relieve the miserable, distressed, afflicted, and delayeth or forbeareth to punish sinners.* It is a very true and useful Rule in Divinity, that those Expressions in Scripture which properly signifie Humane Passions applied to God they signifie only the Effects of such Passions. I do not think but that the learned & unlearned, but especially the last often grosly enough and falsly conceive God with Humane Passions, place and other imperfections. Besides, the frequent use of such proper Expressions will make it more easie to conceive the true spiritual and perfect Nature of God.

SECT.

SECT. XVIII.

(2.) I Adviſe thoſe who are capable thereof to Contemplation, Conſideration, Examination, that they may find out and obſerve particularly what may be fit and proper matter for each of the parts of Prayer before mentioned; that they may judge and be ſatisfied concerning the truth and uſefulneſs of each thing, when it is uſeful and when it is moſt ſo, or its ſeaſonableneſs; that they might alſo often reflect upon and obſerve the intention, purpoſe and end they have in their Prayers, purifie their hearts from all inſincerity and hypocriſie, that they may quicken and ſtir up in themſelves thoſe affections or inclinations which are fit and proper according as they ſee the truth and uſefulneſs of things, upbraiding and reproaching themſelves with an unreaſonable dulneſs and inſenſibleneſs of thoſe things which they ought to be and are capable of being more affected withal.

If any of us have time or ability uſe we it to meditate upon God, his Nature, his Attributes, his Actions, as long and as particularly as we can, to conſider, to judge, to examine what he *truly and really* is and doth, and accordingly to ſtir up our affections and in-

inclinations of Admiration, Honour, Love, Deſire, Fear, Faith and Hope, Obedience, Submiſſion and Self-reſignation. In Confeſſion, Thankſgiving and Petition, the thing is yet more eaſie, and in ſome meaſure may be done by the ignoranteſt and weakeſt. For who cannot, if he would, take ſome time to look back upon his life, upon what he hath done in his Youth in his riper age, when in this or that or t'other place, Condition, Calling or Employment, what was well, what was ill done by him; where he was innocent and ſincere, where not; what he hath been or done the laſt year or week or day? who cannot enter into account and call to mind the common Bleſſings that he and others do conſtantly receive from God, and moreover particularly many favours ſpiritual, of good Inſtructions, wiſe, pious, wholeſome Counſel and Adviſe, good Example from his Miniſter or his Friends, Relations and Neighbours, many good ſuggeſtions and motions of Conſcience that have kept him from wickedneſs, or put him on to what was good; temporal ones alſo of proſperity, health, deliverance, plenty or competency, or at leaſt ſome degree of Neceſſities of this Life? who is there that cannot reflect upon God's goodneſs in forbearance, when he hath reflected upon his ſins, and the gracious offers and aſſurances of his pardon

don and forgiveneſs for Chriſt's ſake upon his true repentance and inward habitual change and amendment of temper and life, and conſequently of Heaven and a happier Life after we here expire and leave this earthly body? And ſo in like manner for Petition, the meaneſt perſon ſurely may in a very little time learn to know much of what he would have, and what he ought to have. If any one ſhould give the meaneſt and ignoranteſt perſon notice to let him know what he wanted and what he would have, yet nothing but what was honeſt and juſt for him to ask, promiſing him withal a full ſupply, I ſuppoſe one ſhould ſoon have a good long Petition. And if thou canſt tell a charitable and wiſe man what thou wouldſt have, and thou thinkeſt juſtly, canſt thou not tell God? haſt thou nothing to ſay to him or deſire of him? who cannot alſo ſomewhat conſider whether what he asks of God be honeſt and juſt, and at laſt refer all freely without grudging to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, as humble and well conditioned Beggars ſhould do? nay, in ſpiritual things the meaneſt perſon may with ſome thought know much what to ask. Is it ſo hard for one to take notice of what Sin or Luſt he hath been guilty of the laſt week or day, and to what he is prone, and from what he cannot abſtain without much difficulty, or

is careleſs whether he doth or no? Is it ſo hard for a perſon to know whether he hath been guilty of or prone to Prophaneſs, Neglect of God, Swearing and Forſwearing, fooliſh, raſh, falſe and fraudulent Affirmations and Oaths, to Malice, Hatred, Revenge, Wrath, Pride, Vain-glory, Contention, Brawling, Reviling, Slander, Drunkenneſs, Luſt or any other Senſuality? When he knows it, behold matter for his Prayer. This may be done before ſecret Prayer, and upon ſolemn occaſions eſpecially. As for others either Sins or Wants, and conſequently in Prayers with others, it is not ſo eaſie to obſerve and mention them with prudence, but thoſe who can may make uſe of their Conſideration here alſo. It is eaſie for any one to underſtand how this Conſideration and Reflection tends to the furniſhing of our minds more or leſs, according as we can make uſe of it, with matter for our Prayers, and that very particular true, juſt, important; as alſo how it tends to make us ſincere, real and ſerious, more fervent, more eaſily frequent and ſeaſonable in our Prayers. And ſo alſo if we be to pray with others we may conſider of our words or ſpeech and geſture, what are ſuch as I have deſcribed, and what are contrary thereto. And the more we do conſider of ſuch things, the better we are like to uſe them. And the want of this is one cauſe why there is and

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hath been ſo many miſerable defects in the due Qualifications mentioned, and in others, in the performance of this Duty; why Prayers both alone and with others have been ſo full of what's falſe, unjuſt, abſurd and unreaſonable for God to give, trifling and of little uſe, barren and contracted, or vainly repeated, ſo full of hypocriſie and inſincerity, of coldneſs and formality, of impertinency and unſeaſonableneſs, of offenſive expreſſions and deportments, of obſcurity, ſuperfluity and Tautology. Men have been put or have put themſelves upon the frequent performance of them by their own Invention and compoſing without any conſideration or other general ſufficient Inſtruction before at any time in their lives, much leſs before each particular Prayer; and ſome few perſons who could have performed this Duty, eſpecially with others, pretty well themſelves, have not conſidered how few there have been that could do likewiſe. There are two extremes in religious performances to be avoided, the one which judgeth people generally to be of leſs ability and capacity than they are, and accordingly allows them leſs liberty than ought to be: and another which judgeth them to be of greater capacity, and therefore allows them too much. Of the one the *Romaniſts* are notoriouſly guilty, of the ſecond

cond all or moſt of thoſe Sects which proteſt againſt and ſeparate from National or more publick and large Churches: of which the reaſon is obvious.

SECT. XIX.

(3.) MAke uſe of other mens Prayers; that is, compoſed by them. Let us ſerve our ſelves of others labours and pains in this kind. Do not either through lazineſs, neglect, or through ſelf-conceit, vain-glory, affectation to do all thy ſelf, though far worſe than if thou hadſt followed or imitated another, diſdain to make uſe of this help and means. And this whether the Prayers thou mayſt make uſe of be pronounced only or written; whether they may be heard only by thee, (ſuch as are thoſe which are recited in Publick by Miniſters and Preachers, or by others whoſe Examples are conſiderable, in private;) Or they may be read alſo, ſuch as are the Publick Prayers which are or may be compoſed by the Church, or ſuch as are on purpoſe compoſed for Families and for Cloſets, or for private and ſecret. Theſe laſt *which are to be read* more eſpecially chooſe we for our uſe as being invented and compoſed with more care, attention and choice, and there-

fore the more likely to have all thoſe due Qualifications mentioned, which written or printed things can have. Here alſo chooſe by the advice of the moſt knowing perſons thoſe which are written by the moſt underſtanding and diſcreet unprejudiced and impartial, pious and godly perſons. For the uſe of theſe means or helps it may be adviſable to commend to moſt perſons theſe four ſteps according to perſons abilities or leiſure and time.

Firſt, Make uſe altogether of ſome Prayers compoſed by others, and of variety of them; as for Morning, for Evening, for the Lord's day before and after the Publick Worſhip, for the Lord's Supper before and after it, for Faſting Times, or Times of Thankſgiving either for publick or private Afflictions or Favours, in caſe of Sickneſs or Danger, in caſe of Deliverance, *&c.* let theſe be thy entire Prayers. Hereby it is moſt likely Perſons will be far better furniſhed than they can from themſelves, with things that are true, juſt, important and of greateſt moment even to them, and with conſiderable variety too, with the moſt general and comprehenſive things: They will find here quickning and ſtirring Examples of Sincerity, of Fervency: They will alſo be inſtructed with the beſt Speech and Expreſſi-

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ons both of Senſe and Affections, of Things and Operations of Soul, the moſt proper, uſual and clear ones, and with ſuch profitable variety thereof as I have heretofore mentioned. Thoſe who cannot read (the Number of which will be every day fewer, I hope) let them get to recite ſome ſhort Prayers by Memory, firſt having learnt them from their Parents or others. Such as the Lord's Prayer with the Explication of it and the ſum of the Ten Commandments in the Church-Catechiſm turn'd into a Prayer, and other ſhort comprehenſive Forms more or fewer according to their Ability; and let Parents be careful to teach their Children ſuch as theſe before, it may be, they can read; and when they can read direct them to ſome of the beſt, and ſee they ſay them. Though thou prayeſt thus out of a Book; yet if thou prayeſt becauſe thou judgeſt the things true, juſt, neceſſary and of great Importance to thee, and thou prayeſt with a ſincere Heart that thou mayſt receive good things from God to pleaſe and ſerve him withal, to do all good to others, to be the moſt profitable and beneficial to the World by thy Temper, Life and Actions, eſpecially in Spiritual things if thou canſt, to be perfect and happy thy ſelf here and hereafter; If thou prayeſt with a fervent Spirit according to the goodneſs of things: thou prayeſt every

whit as well as if thou hadſt invented all thy ſelf; and poſſibly a hundred times better than many conceited Perſons but ignorant and vain-glorious do; whoſe Prayers of their own compoſing may be ſtuffed with untrue, unjuſt, and trifling things, and either they are cold and formal in them or elſe much hypocritical or ſuperſtitious; that is, either they have the ſigns of great Affections to things, when they have not thoſe Affections really in them at all, or not ſo much out of a judgment and ſenſe that things do deſerve them, as out of vain-glory. Or their great Affections are to trifling things. Men have been apt to attempt to run and fly too, before they could go; to attempt greater things before they could do leſs; to attempt to do things before they were furniſhed with ſuch Qualities, which if they wanted they had better not do them at all, or might have done them much better another way than that which they uſed. This is the firſt ſtep, and may be uſed for ſome time only, if we find our ſelves ſufficient (and let it not be careleſsneſs and ſluggiſhneſs that we are not) to advance further. This is no other than what all beginners to learn do: They firſt read good Authors more or leſs who treat concerning the Matter they would learn.

The Second Step may be for Perſons to take

take Parts of ſeveral Prayers and to attempt to put them together and compoſe them, and then commit them to Memory. To take ſuch things out of them which they beſt underſtand and apprehend by Experience or otherwiſe; which they think moſt proper and uſeful for them for their Temper, Employment, or Calling; which they may be moſt affected withal. Thus they may begin to uſe and exerciſe their own judgment in what things are beſt, and what is beſt for them; always with an humble and modeſt mind ready to be more informed.

A Third Step may be to add and interpoſe ſomething of their own Invention or Obſervation, eſpecially if there be any particular Occaſion. As for Example, If thou ſhouldſt find any Sin or Luſt more troubleſome to thee, and be more in danger of being overcome thereby; if thou ſhouldſt fear any particular approaching Evil or be under it, either thou or thy Family; If thou ſhouldſt be ſo happy as to have overcome any Temptation, or to have received any eſpecial Favour; If thou ſhouldſt find thy ſelf upon ſome ſpecial occaſion very ſenſible of ſome Attribute of God, as his Goodneſs, his Power, his Omniſcience, his Juſtice, *&c.* thou needeſt not ſtay till thou findeſt the

Thing or the Expreſſion in thy Book. In order hereto therefore uſe thy ſelf before thy Prayers to reflect and conſider. This which I now ſay principally concerns ſecret Prayer, where it may be done more freely, though it be imperfectly and brokenly either conceived or expreſſed.

Fourthly and laſtly, Proceed to Imitation of others as much as thou canſt; that is, to conſider, invent, examine, and judge the Matter or Senſe of thy Prayers thy ſelf, what things are the moſt important, great, juſt, true, uſeful for thee, and to affect thy ſelf accordingly, and to expreſs and ſignifie them well, and ſo to compoſe and make entire ones of thine own. Which may be often varied by inſiſting now upon one, now upon other things, according to ſome Advices I have heretofore given; that is, what things may be the moſt ſeaſonable, beſt apprehended, moſt affecting. I could heartily wiſh all Mens Abilities and Employments were ſuch, that they might do more in this kind and imitate and exceed the beſt Patterns. I wiſh to that End they were more ſpiritual in the Employment of their Thoughts and Affections, and that there were no fault in their wills that they are not ſo. I wiſh they might make uſe of what Time and Ablility they have, and ought

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ſo to uſe. I wiſh they had more of thoſe Qualities which may fit them for the beſt Performances thereof, the principal of which are as of all others, Charity and Humility. Finally, *Would God that all the Lord's People were Prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them.*

SECT. XX.

(4.) PRay we to God ſometimes, that he would help and aſſiſt us to pray as we ought, to have more of all thoſe due Qualifications, whereby we are fitted to pray well. This Prayer it ſelf ſuppoſeth ſome already, for that once, or ſo often as we make it, which may be often Ejaculatory. Whatever kind of Prayer we think beſt and we deſire to uſe, there may be ſome or other of the fore-named Qualifications which may be prayed for. As if one ſhould pray a Prayer compoſed by another, he might pray that God would give him Sincerity and Fervency in that his Prayer; that God would keep him from Vain-glory, Formality, Coldneſs, that he might do it in all ſincerity of Heart as his Duty to God, and to make and keep him good, and that he might be enabled and diſpoſed both by the Performance of the

Duty it ſelf, and by the good things he ſhall receive upon his asking to ſerve God by doing good; That he might not only have Words in his Tongue, and be upon his Knees or any other Poſture ſignifying Devotion, but that he might alſo well underſtand and mind and attend to what he ſays with his Mouth, and have proportionable degrees of Affection and Motion of Soul, of Honour, Love, Reverence, Faith, Joy, Deſire, Reſignation and Submiſſion towards God, of Grief for and Deteſtation of Sin, of Thankfulneſs for Benefits received, of ardent Deſires for Holineſs and Virtue eſpecially; and hearty ones for all other good things. Nay, a man may pray for Frequency, that is, that God would excite and diſpoſe his Mind to pray in Secret and Private as often as he hath Opportunity, that he might not be ſo backward and averſe therefrom, ſo dull and inept thereto, and that God would give him more Opportunities, if it ſhould happen he ſhould want them. I ſay theſe things a Man may pray for, though he always prayed a Form, and he could not pray, that what he prayed might be juſt, true, important, ſeaſonable, *&c.* becauſe all this was done already, and the matter was ſuppoſed to be ſuch or elſe it would not be made uſe of.

But in the other Steps of Prayer if a Man

Man finds he can or ought to aſcend to them (ſuch as compoſing out of more Prayers, or out of his own Obſervation and Invention) he may pray for the other Qualifications alſo, as that God would excite him to uſe the Means forementioned of Reading, Meditating, Hearing or otherwiſe to pray what was true, juſt, important with Sincerity, Fervency, prudent Seaſonableneſs, and to expreſs and ſignifie theſe things (if he be to pray with others) moſt aptly and conveniently; that God would keep him from Errour and Miſtake, Superſtition, Dulneſs, Inſincerity, Formality, Coldneſs; That God would help his Invention, Attention, Judgment, Memory both in Things and Words proper for Prayer; That he might more particularly know God's Attributes, his own Sins, God's Mercies, his own Wants, *&c.*

When we pray for theſe due Qualifications of our Prayers, let us be ſure that we pray for the beſt of them firſt and moſt. For Example, More for the Truth, Juſtice, Importance, as alſo for Sincerity, Fervency, and prudent ſeaſonableneſs of what we conceive in our Prayers; than for Multitude or Variety, Celerity or Volubility. More alſo for Senſe and Affection; than for the ſigns of them, Speech and Geſture, or more for good Underſtanding and Affection, than for Utterance and Eloquence. To have the afore-

aforeſaid habitual Qualifications for Prayer, is that which is called in ſome Mens, and in Scripture-Phraſe, *the Spirit of Prayer:* Of which therefore we ſee he hath the beſt Part who hath the beſt Qualifications, and he the moſt, who hath the moſt. He who prays true, juſt and important, ſolidly uſeful things with Sincerity, juſt and due Fervency, Frequency and Seaſonableneſs, though they are but very few and ſhort, hath more of the Spirit of Prayer; than he that hath in his Prayers great Variety indeed of Matter and Words; but it is what is falſe or uncertain, unjuſt, ſmall, trivial, or with Inſincerity, Vain-glory formality; or he whoſe Heat and Fervency is only bodily Paſſion raiſed up by Motion and Agitation of his Body, Lungs, Organs of Speech, *&c.* Not to excellent uſeful things becauſe ſeen and perceived ſo, nor felt by any natural anticipatory ſenſe in innocent Souls, nor by the Spirit of God. Of which one certain ſign is when things are untrue, unjuſt, and trivial. Theſe, I ſay, are ſigns that the Heat, the very corporeal Affections of the Soul come not from underſtanding natural Impreſſions or the Spirit of God, but from ſome other Cauſe and that is uſually the natural or affected Motions of the Body.

I ſee not but we may as well expect to have our Prayers heard in theſe things, and to

to receive them, as in others: nay, in ſome of them the moſt of all: ſuch as are the Truth, Juſtice, Importance of our Deſires, our Sincerity, and proportionable Fervency of Spirit. We cannot make a more acceptable Prayer to God than for ſuch Qualifications as theſe; The other of Variety, Particularity of things but eſpecially of Words and Expreſſions being much leſs uſeful and conſiderable, and this eſpecially if we be private Perſons and the leſs it is our Office to pray with others. In the Uſe of theſe Means it is we are principally to expect that God Almighty will by his immediate Influence, by his Holy Spirit help us to pray well. If we ſet our ſelves to read the Scriptures and other good Books, to conſider, examine, meditate, reflect, to pray to him, he may (though we cannot tell when or how much) ſuggeſt to and illuminate our Underſtandings, and which is beſt of all excite holy Affections and Inclinations. It is not likely to be juſt before we are going to pray, or in Prayers, when we have been careleſs, but yet by either the natural Temper of our Bodys, or by our own ſtraining, Excitations or Endeavours, our Invention and Memory are much better than we expected. Nor indeed ſeems it to be ſo much matter which way God helps and aſſiſts us to pray as

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we ought, whether mediately by means or immediately ſo it be done.

SECT. XXI.

(5.) I Add that our Prayers (for we may pray ſincerely for a greater Degree or for conſtancy of Sincerity it ſelf) for all theſe due Qualifications may be ſucceſsful, let us be ſure to be ſincere hearted, deſirous and ready to uſe all that God ſhall beſtow upon us to ſerve him by doing good: And eſpecially in this Caſe if God ſhall beſtow upon us this Spirit and Gift of Prayer more or leſs, that we be humble and modeſt, and that we do not think of our ſelves above what we ought, not think our ſelves to have more than we have, nor to neglect and take no notice of God the Giver; as if we had what we have from our ſelves; That we be not vain-glorious contemptuous of others, pleaſing our ſelves *abſolutely* in our own Superiority to them: But that we mortifie and extinguiſh all ſuch vile Appetites, Affections, and Luſts of the Fleſh, or degenerate and ſinful Nature: And that we humbly acknowledge God the Authour of what we have and are, be it more or leſs, that we have a right and due Eſtimation of it:

it: That we remember very well like and highly approve of it, that we and all we have is given us, not for our ſelves only to pleaſe our ſelves, but to pleaſe God by doing good with them. Theſe are the likely Capacities to receive theſe things of God: Theſe render us the moſt fit ſubjects for God's Suggeſtions, Inſtructions, Illuminations, Excitation of holy Affections for all Divine things, and indeed for all other Favours. *The Meek will he guide in Judgment, and the Meek will he teach his Way.* Pſalm 25. Verſe 9.

SECT. XXII.

(6.) IN one word, when thou haſt made all thy Petitions and propounded them to God, refer them all moſt freely to the Divine Will, let there be nothing that thou haſt deſired, but if it ſeem not fit to the Divine Wiſdom thou retracteſt it and deſireſt it not: thou obſtinately deſireſt nothing. By this Means thou wilt be ſure that all thy Petitions will be juſt. For in ſum, thou deſireſt no more than God thinks fit, and ſurely all that is juſt. It is one of the ſage ſayings in *Pir. Avoth* of *R. Simeon*, לא תעש תפלתך קבע *make not thy Prayer fixed.* I think it will be no great harm done

done to the *Rabbi*, and agreable enough to what there follows, if we interpret it, *that our Prayers ſhould not be ſuch as to fix and preſcribe certain Laws to God: but to implore his Mercy and leave all to his wiſe and good Will.*

SECT. XXIII.

(7.) WHich indeed ſhould have been in the firſt Place being the moſt general, be not content and ſatisfied with any Prayers. Some there are in which are many things falſe, ſome in which are many Petitions and Deſires from God very juſt; and yet with a ſtrange Boldneſs and Confidence, as if Men would preſcribe to God, or that they always knew certainly what he ought to do, and what he therefore will do, in things which neither they nor any other Man can have much certainty without Divine Revelation: nay, ſometimes in things where the contrary to what they deſire ſeems moſt likely to others beſides themſelves to be juſt, and therefore fit for God to grant. As when one Party prays for Succeſs in his or his Party's Cauſe, for Victory or Superiority; When a Man prays that God would defend and propagate his Truth, meaning ſome certain Opinion

nion of his own which may be falſe and hurtful. All which generally comes from Pride and Self-conceit. Mortals are very apt to think they oblige the Divinity by the honour they do it by their Prayers to grant them what they deſire. The *Jews* at this day think and ſay that God cannot withſtand their Prayers. It hath been ſaid, I doubt, but too often vainly and preſumptuouſly, that God could not hold out againſt a *praying People.* But too well known hath been the confidence of many private perſons that their Prayers ſhould be anſwered; and as well known hath been their diſappointment.

Many Prayers alſo may be ſtuffed with things very trivial and ſlight comparatively, while the greater things are neglected: ſmaller ſins, and other ſins may be confeſſed eagerly, but greater, and their own not taken notice of or but ſlightly. Petitions may be made for Worldly things importunately, but for Spiritual negligently or coldly. We may pray for Gifts or excellent Qualities of Underſtanding more than for Graces or holy Diſpoſitions of Will: For Pardon more than for Goodneſs; For Priviledges more than for Dutys; For Juſtification more than for Sanctification: For Peace and Aſſurance before and more than for Regeneration, Renewal of our Natures, Mortification of our Luſts,

Luſts, Love to God for his Excellencies, Charity, Humility, Spirituality. In Prayers alſo may be very much Inſincerity, the things deſired may be ſelfiſh, to gratifie immoderate Luſts of Revenge, Pride, Superiority, Envy, Covetouſneſs, Senſuality, Luxury or the like. Some Prayers (I wiſh I could not ſay moſt) may be very cold, formal, meer words.

Be not, I ſay, very well ſatisfied ſo thou haſt but prayed, though it may be very badly. Endeavour not only to pray, but pray well and as thou oughteſt, and therefore make uſe of ſuch Means and Directions as have been preſcribed.

I add here too as an uſeful Caution by the by, Be not content and ſatisfied with thy having prayed well. If thy Prayers have been ſuch as have proceeded from good Qualities in thee, and tend to make thee more ſo too, and thou feeleſt thy ſelf very much delighted with the Performance thereof, and much diſpoſed thereby to the Univerſal Practice of thy Duty; think not that thou haſt been good enough at the time of thy Prayers, and mayſt be negligent every where elſe. In all thy ſucceeding Actions purſue thy good Diſpoſition begun by thy Prayers at any time, by Watchfulneſs and Reflection all the following day, by frequent Checks when thou doeſt ill, and Encouragements

and

and Joy when thou doeſt well, by frequent Ejaculations and Reſolutions.

And ſo I have done with the Fifth General Head, *(viz.)* Directions concerning Prayer.

CHAP. V.

SECT. I.

VI. THE laſt General Head was the Excuſes or Pretences Men uſually make why they do not Pray eſpecially in Private or Secret, in which I ſhall be but ſhort. They are moſt commonly but theſe three: (1.) That they need not Pray. (2.) They have not Ability to Pray. (3.) They have not Time.

The firſt Pretence ſome Men have for not praying is, that there is no need of it, it is to no purpoſe, and that therefore it is a fooliſh thing. The Reaſon of which their Opinion is either becauſe they think there is no God at all, nor any Being ſuperior to themſelves in Power, Wiſdom and Good-

neſs who hears them when they do pray: or elſe becauſe all future things are willed and determined by God already, and that he is unchangeable.

As to the firſt of theſe Reaſons, if it were true it would render all Prayers and all things contained in them ridiculous indeed. But I ſhall return no other Anſwer to theſe Monſters of Inſolency and Dulneſs, but that though they hereby call all Mankind (except one or two of themſelves if there be any) Sots and Fools in ſpending ſo conſiderable a part of their time: yet the World will have better Demonſtrations (and they ought to be no leſs againſt ſo Univerſal a Teſtimony) than ever they have brought to prove them ſo, before they will believe it; or before theſe Objectors themſelves ought to believe it. Moreover, there have been in this laſt Age ſuch and ſo many Proofs of God's and Spirits Exiſtence both highly probable, and ſome abſolutely neceſſary as I have upon the longeſt conſideration judged, that it is nothing but an obſtinate Affection of Uncontroulableneſs and Licentiouſneſs in thoſe who do or may know them, or a pitiable dulneſs which muſt make them capable of a contrary perſwaſion.

As to the Second Reaſon, of God's predetermination of all things, It muſt mean more particularly one of theſe two things:

Firſt,

Firſt, That it is needleſs *to ſet our ſelves to Pray*, (meaning all Ingredients of a Prayer) becauſe it is predetermined by God whether we ſhall or no.

Or elſe, Secondly, That it is needleſs *to Pray to God for any good thing*, (meaning by Prayer *Petition* only) becauſe he hath predetermined whether we ſhall have the thing we pray for or no.

To the Firſt of theſe it is to be anſwered, That there is the ſame reaſon againſt all will, endeavor, action whatſoever to obtain any good thing we want: For Example, Againſt the chewing and ſwallowing our Food that we may be nouriſhed. For the Argument runs thus. God hath determined before we pray whether we ſhall pray or not. If the firſt, then we ſhall do it without our will or endeavor: If the ſecond, then we ſhall not do it with them. In the ſame manner we may argue: God hath determined before we chew and ſwallow our Food to nouriſh us, whether we ſhall do thoſe actions or no. If the firſt, we ſhall do them without our will and endeavour; if the ſecond, we ſhall not though we do will and endeavour to do them. But we do not ſee men in this and the like caſes abſtain from their will and endeavor for ſuch a Reaſon though it be ſuggeſted to them. But they always uſe both, where they believe them

to be the cauſe or condition of their obtaining any good thing they deſire.

And indeed they have the greateſt reaſon ſo to do, which is a Second thing to be anſwered. For (briefly and not to ſpend much time here in theſe ſubtilties) ſince men muſt of neceſſity *will and endeavour*, after ſomething or not (whether it be or be not predetermined they ſhall will and endeavour or not) there being no middle: ſurely it is moſt manifeſt that they are to take that part of which there appears to them the beſt Effects and conſequences: but it is as manifeſt that there doth appear better effects and conſequences of *willing and endeavouring* after that which is the cauſe or caution of any good thing, than of omitting ſo to do or lying idle becauſe God hath predetermined we know not which of the two, *(viz.)* either we ſhall *will and endeavor* or not. But this is not the ordinary ſenſe of this Objection here, though it be in a controverſie which hath filled many Volumes.

To the Second therefore, *viz.* That it is needleſs to petition God for any thing becauſe he hath predetermined whether we ſhall have it or no, many things may be replyed. As,

(1.) Let it be obſerved, That this Objection lyeth only againſt that part of *a Prayer*, which is called *Petition*: but not againſt the other,

other, which we have often mentioned, *viz.* Acknowledgment of God's Perfections with ſutable Affections, Thankſgiving, Confeſſion, Profeſſion and Reſolution of Obedience, Explication of our Wants. All which have many excellent uſes, beſides their ſubſerviency to Petition; as hath been before particularly ſhewn.

(2.) May be replied, That which hath been juſt now ſaid, *viz.* That the ſame Argument will hold at leaſt againſt the uſe of all means to obtain any good which we do not ſee to have a neceſſary and inſeparable connexion with their end. To repeat it very briefly. God hath prædetermined, that we ſhall or ſhall not have the thing we Petition or Pray for: If the firſt, we ſhall have it without praying: If the ſecond, we ſhall not have it with praying. In like manner God hath prædetermined we ſhall or ſhall not be nouriſhed: If the firſt, we ſhall be nouriſhed without our chewing or ſwallowing our Food: If the ſecond, we ſhall not be nouriſhed with them. Wherefore chewing and ſwallowing our Food is a needleſs and ſuperfluous thing, and conſequently to be omitted. But men neither do nor ought to infer and practiſe thus in this laſt Caſe, for the reaſon which hath been in the firſt ſenſe of this Objection and for another which ſhall be preſently mentioned: and

therefore they ought not to do it in the firſt. And in very truth they are ſome other concealed cauſes which keep men from praying when this of God's prædetermination is pretended. *viz.* Either wickedneſs or ineptneſs to ſpiritual things, either badneſs or *materiality* of mind, if it may be ſo called.

(3.) I anſwer, That ſuppoſing the opinion of God's abſolute prædetermination of all things and the inference too: *viz.* That nothing is granted us upon the condition of our duly qualified Prayers, ſhould ſeem to us more probable: yet ſuppoſing alſo the contrary Opinion, *viz.* That *God doth not ſo predetermine all things as not to give ſome good things upon the condition of our Prayers*, to appear to us of many excellent uſes and effects in the World; we ought to be ſo much the leſs averſe from or more inclined to the belief of it. But ſuppoſing both the Opinions to appear to us equally uncertain or probable, we ought, I think, in this and every other ſuch caſe to believe and accordingly practice on that ſide which hath apparently the beſt conſequences or is of moſt good effect. But the belief of our receiving things from God upon our due Prayers and the conſequent practiſe is of infinite better conſequence to the World than the belief of the contrary, and conſequently the leaving quite off to pray at all. Such are the

the frequent occaſions of bringing God to our minds, the ſenſe of our entire dependence upon him; the conſtant remembrance of and attention to the only condition of ſo great a favor from him as the granting our Petitions; *viz.* Happineſs, a diſpoſed Soul to uſe all things to ſerve and pleaſe him with, and to do all the good we can; or Piety and Charity; and therefore how dear and acceptable to him ſuch qualities of Soul are; whence we ſhall be the moſt ſtrongly engaged to adorn our Souls with them, that we may be well pleaſing in his ſight and capable of all inſtances of his favor.

(4.) I anſwer, That it ſeems to our very ſhort reaſon and imperfect comprehenſion of things to be the beſt Syſtem of the Univerſe (that is, that there is the greateſt happineſs as to extenſion, intenſion and duration reſulting therefrom) that ſome things ſhould be done by God upon condition of the certain uſe of our liberty or faculty of ſelf-determination, and particularly, the giving us ſome good things upon our applying our ſelves duly to requeſt them at his hands: and that therefore it is more probable to be ſo. Of which I ſay no more in this place.

(5.) And laſtly, To take away all cavel and ſatisfie all ſcruple and doubt to them

who believe the Holy Scripture, I anſwer, that it is therein expreſly affirmed, that our due Petitions are ſuch conditions of God's giving us good things with which ſometimes at leaſt he will, and without which he will not give them to us. Some things he will always certainly give us upon our due Prayers. Such as *Grace* and *Pardon*: or inward ſtrength in ſome degree or other to repent and become good, and forgiveneſs of our paſt ſins when we do repent. Other things alſo he will certainly give us upon the ſame condition of our Prayers, though we do not know certainly (very probably we may) which nor when. Becauſe we cannot tell neither by Reaſon nor Revelation whether it be juſt or conſiſtent with the Univerſal Good that he ſhould.

Nothing can be more plain than that of our Saviour. *Luke* 11. 9, 10. *I ſay unto you ask and it ſhall be given to you, ſeek and ye ſhall find, knock and it ſhall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that ſeeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it ſhall be opened.* And in the 8*th Verſe* it is taught us by ſimilitude, that God will not ſometimes give without our *importunity* in asking; but with it he will. *I ſay unto you, Though he* (his friend) *will not riſe and give him becauſe he is his friend: yet becauſe of his importunity, he will riſe and give him as many*

as

as he needeth. St. *James* telleth the Chriſtians, to whom he wrote, *that they did fight and war, (i. e.* probably they uſed violent endeavors and that by contention and ſtrife to obtain things*) and yet had not, becauſe they did not ask.* Nay, *they asked and received not becauſe they asked amiſs.* James 4. Ver. 2, 3.

This fully anſwereth the Objection by denying the Conſequence of the Argument. For it doth not follow, that becauſe God hath prædetermined that we ſhall have any thing, therefore we ſhall have it without our Prayer: but on the contrary it is moſt certain from theſe and other places of the Holy Scripture, as it is highly probable by reaſon; that whether God hath or hath not prædetermined we ſhall have ſome things; he hath determined that with our Prayer we ſhall, and without our Prayer we ſhall not have them. It is certain, that he hath determined the *connexion* of our *having* and *praying* whenſoever they are: whether he hath determined our *having* and our *praying* or not.

But we ſhall make uſe of this Anſwer further, to prove that it is a *perfection* in us or *a good uſe of our ſelves* to pray or deſire things from God. For if we do at all *will* any action or omiſſion of any action, to do this or that or not to do it, whether this

our

our *willing* be prædetermined or not; it is moſt certainly the perfection or beſt uſe thereof (as hath been before intimated) *to will* that of which there appears to us the beſt conſequences and effects: but it is as certain from the Scripture and Reaſon too that there are better conſequences of *willing* to pray and of *praying* or deſiring things from God, than of *omitting* or neglecting it: and particularly beſides thoſe many other excellent ones a little before mentioned, the receiving of many good things for our ſelves and ſome the beſt we are capable of. Better conſequences than theſe I am ſure the neglect or omiſſion of petitioning God cannot ſo much as pretend to. Nay, hence alſo it further ſtill follows, that if we have any liberty or faculty of ſelf-determination it is not only our *perfection* to pray, but alſo our *obligation* (ſuch is my ſenſe of that word.) For certainly we are bound to will and chuſe that which is our *perfection*, if we do not ſee it inconſiſtent with a greater good, as ſurely we do not ſee this to be. And thus much for the Firſt Pretence.

SECT.

SECT. II.

(2.) A Second Pretence men make uſe of, is want of Ability to Pray. Alas! they for their part are very ignorant of and not able to diſcern the truth, juſtice, importance of the matter of their Prayers; they know very little; they are ignorant of the Nature and Attributes of God; they know or can remember very little of their own hearts and actions, what are and what are not ſins, and of what they have been or are guilty. And as little ſtill are they able to know and call to mind the particular Favours and Benefits they have received, or the things they want or ſhould deſire, eſpecially ſpiritual ones. They want Prudence to attend to what is ſeaſonable. Moreover, they are dull and heavy and inept to apprehend, attend to, be affected with ſuch things. Finally, they want Underſtanding, Memory, Judgment, Affection for God, their Sins, their Mercies, their Wants; and moſt of all do they want Invention and Memory for fit Words and Speech. Alas, how ſhould they know to expreſs themſelves well? Sometimes they have good things in their mind but they cannot ſpeak them. To this

this Effect is their Second Excuſe. To which I Anſwer:

(1.) All this, except that of want of Apprehenſion and Affection is no juſt Excuſe for not joyning with others in Prayers either in Publick or Private; it is no Excuſe for not being at Prayers and coming to them. For there, moſt-what both things true, juſt and uſeful very particularly ſometimes, and Words too are invented to our Hands. And as for our apprehending, conceiving and being affected with ſuch things as our Prayers ſhould contain; many things we can in ſome meaſure apprehend and are affected withal in general, as God's Power, his Omnipreſence, his Univerſal Goodneſs, his Mercy, his Juſtice, our own Temporal Wants and Mercies at leaſt, ſome very groſs and palpable Sins. Begin we here and mind we theſe things firſt. And then as for other more particular and more ſpiritual things, we muſt and may apply our Minds, excite and ſtir up our Affections to them. The oftner we do this the better we ſhall do it, let us begin and try and uſe our ſelves to it a while. How many who make this Excuſe of Non-Ability, are unwilling and backward ſo much as to joyn with others in praying either in Publick or Private?

A ſign

A ſign they have no Mind or Inclination to it, they care not for their Duty, and they are willing to be and do ſo ſtill, and indulge themſelves in it. Let Perſons but uſe themſelves to come and be preſent at Prayers, they'l find in time ſome good or other of it; they'l ſometime or other apprehend ſomething, ſometime or other their Affections may be touched, and they may begin to find ſomething which may pleaſe there. Howſoever they will not be ſo averſe thereform, it will not be ſo tedious to them. This eſpecially if People live pretty ſober Lives, and they are not addicted to things which they know to be materially evil and naught; but their chief Fault hath been, they have not minded their due End in their Actions ſo much as they might have done.

(2.) All this Non-Ability except again that of Ineptneſs to apprehend and to be affected with Spiritual things, or the Matter of our Prayers (which is to be remedied as aforeſaid) is no reaſonable Excuſe for our not uſing others Prayers or Forms, either in the Scripture as the Lord's Prayer, or compoſed by judicious and pious perſons. For here again are good Matter and Words ready for us, and cannot we read or repeat theſe with Underſtanding and hearty Affections; or

or learn them and repeat them by heart, whether we can or cannot read? The meaneſt and ignoranteſt and thoſe who cannot read (who, I hope, will be every day fewer) can learn ſome ſuch Prayers without Book, ſhorter or longer, fewer or more, ſuch as the Lord's Prayer and other Prayers: none hath ſo bad a Memory as to do nothing in this kind. And that all may have the leſs Excuſe let Parents and thoſe who Educate Children teach them ſome ſuch Prayers as ſoon as may be. That Perſons may begin as ſoon as they are capable of underſtanding things to take notice of God their Creator and Suſtainer from whom they have every thing.

(3.) I have propounded ſome Means already which Men are able to make uſe of, and by the Uſe of which Men may either be preſent at and joyn with others Prayers, or read and repeat judicious and devout Forms of Prayers with Underſtanding and Affection in ſome degree or other; and they may ſtill further advance (ſome at leaſt) to compoſe Prayers of their own out of others Prayers, or their own Inventions and Obſervations, or both together. Can we not read nor hear read the Holy Scripture and underſtand the plain places, and ſome of us the obſcure by others Explication? Can we

not

not read other good Religious Books or hear them read? can we not ſometimes retire, meditate, reflect, think of God and our ſelves what we are, what we would be, what we ſhould be, what we ſhall be? Can we not read, obſerve, commit to Memory the Patterns of other wiſe and good Chriſtians whether ſpoken or written? Can we not pray to God to help and aſſiſt us to obtain one or more of the Qualifications of good Prayers, eſpecially Sincerity and Fervency? I ſay, cannot Perſons uſe theſe Means? I think they can: All of them ſome or other more or leſs. I know there are many Degrees in theſe things, ſome Men can make uſe of more of theſe Means, and more frequently; All Men have not the like Ability or Opportunity: but all have ſome. And I do not think but the moſt buſie, dull, ignorant and inept Perſons may uſe more Means to be better than they are. No Men that are imperfect and bad do all they can to become better: Not ſo much as the Beggar who goes from Door to Door, or ſits upon the Dung-hill, or waits upon Swine and Beaſts. And this is that which will be laid to their Charge be ſure, whatever elſe will, and which will condemn them.

SECT.

SECT. III.

(3.) A Third Excuſe is, that they want Time, they have not Time. If by not having Time Men mean that they do always employ themſelves in ſomething or other beſides their Prayers, I believe it is true; for no Man can be perfectly idle ſo as to do or think nothing: But if they mean they cannot have Time, this I deny, I think there is no Man ſo occupied and employed, who cannot get ſome Time more or leſs, and I confine not all Men to any certain Frequency or Length: Nay, I think few Men but may get ſome Time daily without hindrance or let to their other juſt Affairs; but it would rather prove a help. It is manifeſt by Experience, that there are few Mens Lives in which there are not thouſands of trifling unprofitable and ſinful and miſchievous Actions. How much Time paſſeth away by Men with their Hands in their Pockets, they do not know what to do, they are fain to caſt about and invent ſomething to ſpend their Time in, or they are prepared to take what's next, and that's uſually none of the beſt? How many Hours are ſpent in unprofitable ſinful Chat and Talk, in Swearing by God and Curſing others; and

and yet they cannot have Time to pray to God, and pray for themſelves and others? How much Time ſuperfluous do Men ſpend in Plays, Games, and Exerciſes, in Drinking and turning down ſuperfluous and intoxicating Cups; and yet ſome few Minutes cannot be gotten to pray neither in Publick, Private nor Secret? For publick Prayers and other parts of the Worſhip of God, reading and explaining his Word and Doctrine, How many ſit at Home and ſleep or do any trifling Action, or chuſe ſomething to do on purpoſe on that Time, which they might as well or better do at another, or wander about idly?

Beſides, on the Lord's day are not all other Occupations, at leaſt the moſt unneceſſary, by Law and Conſent laid aſide on purpoſe that Men might have Time? they have it then for private and ſecret Devotion as well as for publick; and yet we ſee moſt Men will not take it. What reaſon then have we to think that Men cannot find Time on other days, when we ſee they will not make uſe of it when it is put into their hands? Nor do I think that Men generally are ſo toiled or tired or dull with their week's Work, but that they might take ſome Time on that day.

Further, If thy Employments ſhould be

more innocent, uſeful or profitable, and ſhould fill up all thy Time (which I do not think but that ſome days at leaſt there is leiſure) make ſome room for thy Prayers, get ſome Time. By what right have thoſe things all thy Time, and thy Prayers none at all? Sure I am thy Prayers deſerve it as well as moſt other of thy moſt uſeful Affairs, and are as good and neceſſary even to thee; but why then ſhould they alone be excluded from ſome ſhare of thy Time, and all other Things have theirs? why ſhould they not have ſo much as a few Minutes in a day? For ſome Sport or Game or Divertiſement even daily thou wouldſt make Time in thy moſt profitable and uſeful Affairs: Thou wouldſt begin them ſooner, or defer them longer, or end them later, or diſpatch them quicker; why not then for thy Prayers? which ſure are ſometimes at leaſt as good as thy Divertiſements. Time! we cannot get Time! can we have Time to think and talk of our Neighbour's good Qualities (and it is well if we did it oftner) to inſtance in, to praiſe and magnifie the worthy Endowments and Deeds of any virtuous, diſcreet and beneficent Perſon, and how much we and the Town or the Country or the Publick is beholding to him; and yet we cannot have Time to acknowledge God's

God's Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs of which our Lives and all the Univerſe are full, and every thing thou or others are or do is in him and by him? Time! have we not Time to thank God for his numberleſs and incomparable paſt Favours, preſent Bleſſings and future Hopes, for which we need not ſtir over our Threſholds; and yet can get it to make civil Viſits on purpoſe to thank Perſons for any conſiderable Inſtances of their Kindneſs? (though Men are not apt to be over grateful here neither.) Time! why ſhould we have Time to enjoy and make uſe of all other God's Favours, and not of this, which is the greateſt of all from whence ſprings the moſt ſweet ſatisfying Pleaſure, *(viz.)* our Capacity of attending to, honouring, truſting in, depending upon, loving God, offering, profeſſing, reſolving our Love, Service and Obedience to him. If we be under any Affliction, and our Soul bowed down with Grief, or in any Perplexity or difficult Affair, we can find Time to unboſome our ſelves to a Friend to crave their Counſel, their Comfort, their Aſſiſtance any other way; and we cannot forſooth have Time to do this ſame thing to God the beſt Friend we have in the World, who would by making us good make us capable of receiving and then moſt freely give us all other good things.

Oh fooliſh and ungrateful Creatures! all this Excuſe of want of Time is but pretended, and is indeed a ſign of ſottiſh Ignorance of our own good, and of the badneſs of our own Hearts and Lives. We know not our own Happineſs, and are perfectly loth to think of God, and of ſuch things as ſhould be in our Prayers, leſt we ſhould be engaged to be good, and have our Minds and Affections taken off from worldly things to be ſet upon better and then pretend we have no Time.

The more plain Truth is, we Would have no Time, and are glad we can order it ſo as to have none, at leaſt we are very well content; and then we complain and excuſe it thus. But let us not endeavour to deceive others and our ſelves, it is better to confeſs the Truth, that we have no Mind nor Will, and then we ſhall be ſomewhat nearer mending the Fault.

And now it remains only that all perſons be earneſtly exhorted to the performance of this Duty ſo acceptable to God, ſo beneficial to others, ſo profitable and comfortable to our ſelves, which will render us wiſer, better, happier, and whereby we may obtain all good things from God. That they would frequent publick Prayers upon all juſt Occaſions, and ſometimes if not for their own Benefit, yet for good Example to others who want

want it: as alſo hearing the Scriptures Read, and Preaching, that is the expounding, confirming, applying of the Scripture. That they would enter alſo into their Cloſets and Pray in ſecret to God their heavenly Father, eſpecially upon ſolemn Occaſions, as before and after the publick Worſhip of God, on Lord's days and other days, and moſt eſpecially before the Lord's Supper. That they would alſo Pray in private with their Families as many as they can get together or ſpare, and this either by judicious and pious Prayers compoſed by others, or their own if they be able. All this as frequently and in ſuch manner as their Ability and Opportunity will permit: And that they would not let ſluggiſhneſs or lazineſs, deadneſs to holy things, nay, hatred and averſation from thoſe things which will make them better to hinder them, ſatisfying themſelves with ſome Pretences and falſe Excuſes, which God and their Conſciences even now, much leſs another day will never allow of. I leave it with Men's Conſciences: out of hearty love to God, to them and my ſelf I have diſcharged mine to them. I am confident we following this Advice, ſhould all be ſoon much a better and ſoberer People, live more conſcientiouſly, piouſly, charitably, peaceably, comfortably both to our ſelves

ſelves and others, and all the Bleſſings of God would be multiplied upon us all here, and we ſhould be more fitted for Heaven hereafter.

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